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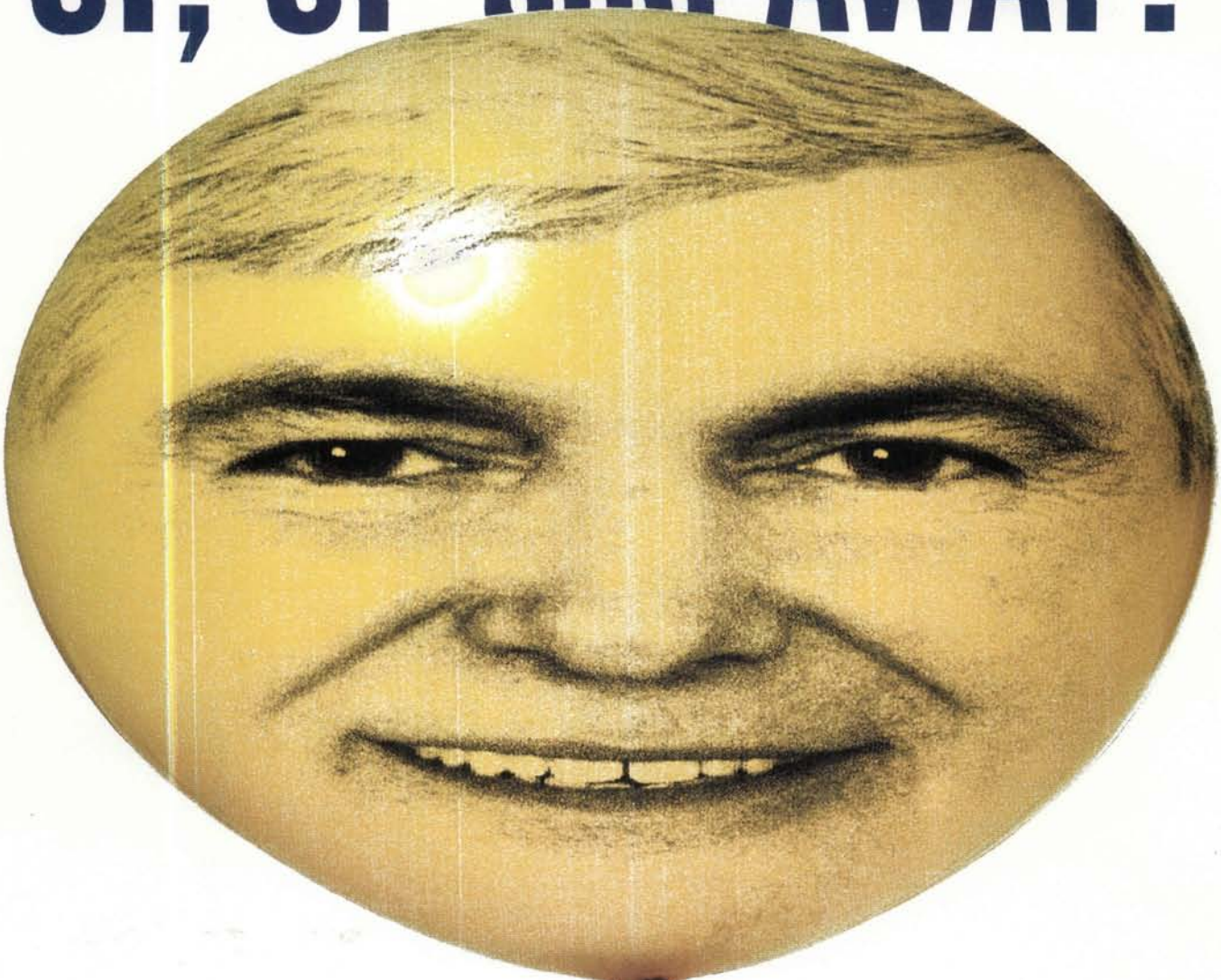
THE NEW REPUBLIC

UP, UP and AWAY?



Coming Republican Budget Scams
mickey kaus

The End of the New Deal
james q. wilson

Inside Newt's Beautiful Balloon
fred barnes

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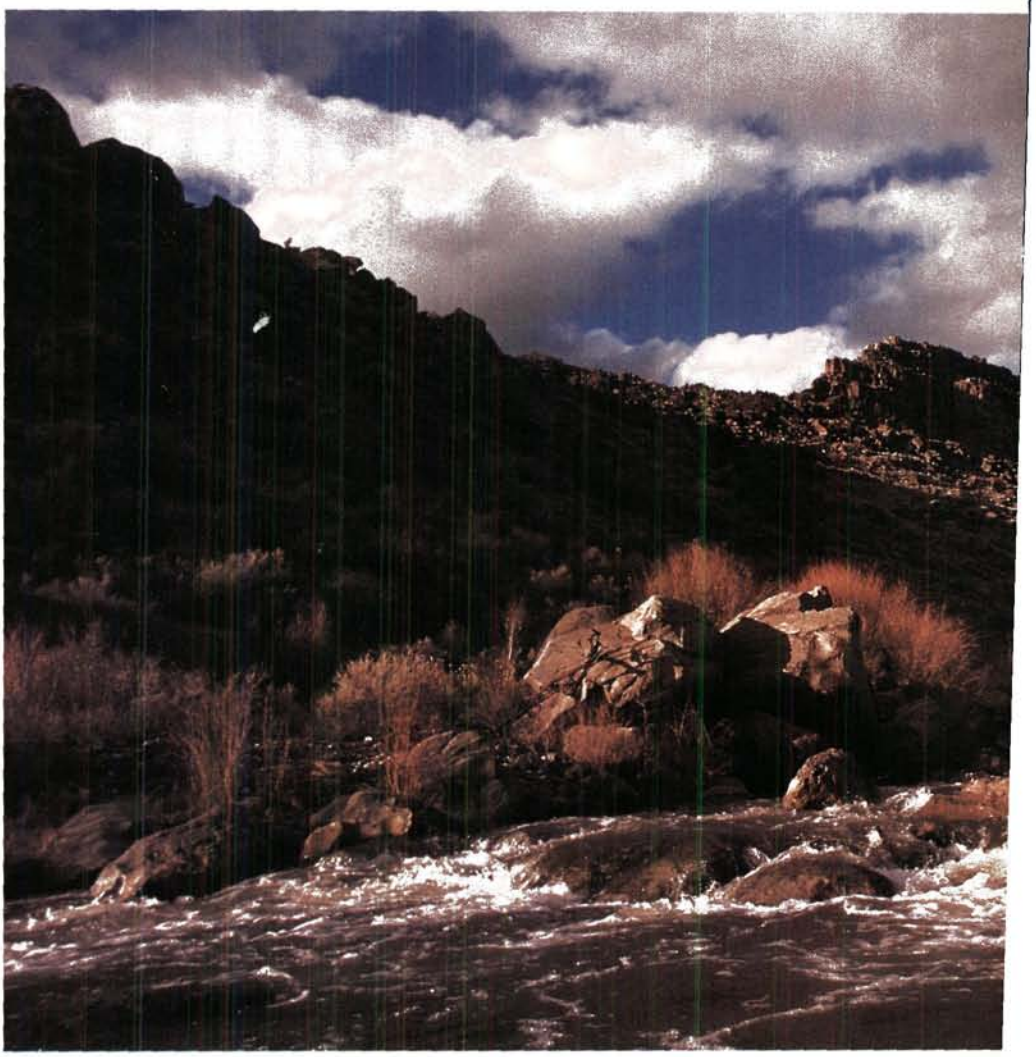

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FROM WASHINGTON

Ruse you can use

When Rupert Murdoch decides to finance a made-for-TV version of *The Newt Gingrich Story*, you can bet that one dramatic scene will be the House leadership meeting at which Gingrich commits the Republicans to balancing the budget by 2002. As described breathlessly by Paul Gigot of *The Wall Street Journal*, the Republicans' commander was faced with demoralization among his troops. John Kasich, the chairman of the House Budget Committee, wanted to back off the balanced-budget promise:

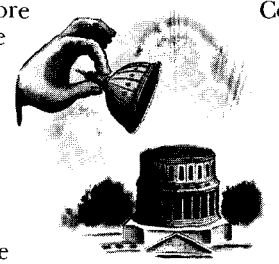
> When had this goal ever been "written in stone"? he wanted to know.
>
> Whereupon Speaker Newt Gingrich immediately piped up: "I move that we write it in stone. Do I hear a second?"
>
> The second was heard, the mock motion carried, and that's the last time John Kasich has mused about not balancing the budget.

More than the poll-driven Contract with America, the Republicans' balanced-budget promise has convinced many otherwise levelheaded conservatives that Gingrich is an American Thatcher a revolutionary leader dedicated to dissolving the "bureaucratic welfare state." The "fact that Mr. Gingrich didn't know how to make the numbers add up himself didn't seem to matter," David Rogers and Gerald Seib of the *Journal* reported. Great leaders take on great challenges, after all. They don't necessarily bother with annoying details: "In one stroke, the speaker had plunged himself—and his party—into a commitment that has huge ramifications...."

Those of us who suspect that Gingrich is something less than a world-historical figure are understandably skeptical. To meet their budget goal, we note, the Republicans must cut the deficit by $1.3 trillion over seven years. That's twice as big as the cut in President Clinton's 1993 budget plan. And Clinton did more than half of his deficit-reducing with tax increases. The Republicans say they will do it with spending cuts alone—indeed, while lowering taxes, and without touching Social Security. We skeptics have one question: How are they going to weasel out of *this* bind?

It's a good question to ask, even if you sympathize with the GOP's zero-deficit goal. Especially if you sympathize with it, actually, since recognizing potential budget scams is the first step to stopping them. There are, it turns out, plenty of ways to pretend to balance the budget without really doing it. Here's a sampler:

Time-shifting: Want to show no deficit in 2002? Push losses back to 2003. The House Republicans' tax proposals, for example, are heavily "back-loaded," meaning their costs balloon over time. True, it will be hard to put off the day of reckoning for a full seven years—one reason Kasich got cold feet. But some GOP tax breaks actually generate money for a few years before they become big losers. (One provision would let you pay tax on your existing IRA now, in exchange for withdrawing the money tax-free later.) Why not delay those breaks so their revenue-producing years happen to coincide with the 2002 target? Better yet, have the government sell a bunch of assets—broadcast frequencies, loan portfolios—just in time to eliminate the deficit for a year.



Black boxes: "We have decided that we're taking Medicare into a separate box," Gingrich announced recently. "It should not be entangled in the budget debate." The speaker was clearly up to some trickery, but nobody in Washington could figure out quite what. The Medicare trust fund is scheduled to lose $161 billion between now and 2002. Was Gingrich saying he was going to treat this as "off budget"—that he would only balance the budget before counting the trust fund losses? That was too big a scam even for Gingrich. Republicans could hardly exclude Medicare, just because it is generating losses, while *counting* Social Security, which is currently generating large surpluses. It's easy to balance a budget if you simply don't count any program that loses money.

But the "separate box" idea suggests a less blatant, yet equally effective, ruse. Republicans could note that the trust fund is going broke, then call for a commission to "reinvent" the program and save, say, $250 billion over seven years. ("Reinvention" is to Gingrich what "waste, fraud and abuse" was to Reagan, a way to pretend that huge budget cuts can be achieved without actually hurting anyone.)

Who could object if this Medicare commission—which Senator Bob Dole has already called for—takes a year or two to come up with its recommendations? In the meantime, the Republicans can count the $250 billion in projected savings as part of their bold budget plan.

Entitlement caps: How can Republicans appear to control entitlement programs other than Medicare—programs such as Medicaid, farm subsidies, civil service and military pensions? Simple. Cap them. Write a law saying their cost shall be held to—well, you can really fill in any number you want. If costs exceed that level, decree that the requisite amount will automatically be "sequestered." Sound familiar? This is the mechanism that the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill tried to use to control the budget. The approach failed, of course, because when the budget targets were breached and the time came for a big sequester, Congress chickened out.

"Entitlement caps" are not budget cuts; they are a promise to make budget cuts at a later date. They allow Republicans to avoid explaining to the voters all the nasty things—such as smaller checks—budget-cutting will actually require. But unless those cuts are explained, politicians will be unlikely to actually go through with them. Kasich, in fact, made his name as an honest budget reformer when he proposed an anti-deficit plan in 1993 that avoided "cap" nonsense and specified actual cuts. But that was then.

Dessert first: If the Republicans really did balance the federal budget, of course, interest rates would drop. Economic growth would probably increase. This would itself have a positive impact on the budget, as interest on the debt fell and tax receipts rose. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated this "bonus" effect would amount to a $170 billion improvement in the budget between now and 2002. The great temptation will be for Republicans to award themselves this bonus simply because they have *promised* to cut the budget—and to count it, not as a lagniappe that produces a budget surplus, but as the last $170 billion in deficit reduction.

If the Republicans ultimately fall short, of course, they can always stage some sort of confrontation and blame Clinton for the ensuing impasse. But why would they have to do that? Between a Medicare commission and entitlement caps and the balanced budget bonus, Gingrich & Co. can put out a "plan" that achieves most of their $1.3 trillion savings through pure make-believe. Then the *Journal* can write another round of articles about what true revolutionaries they are.

MICKEY KAUS

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CORRESPONDENCE

Exegesis

To the editors:

On the occasion of the National Magazine Awards, Mickey Kaus attacked my prize-winning TNR articles for presenting a "misleading" view of the Clinton health bill ("No Exegesis," May 8). He promised to "resolve" the controversy, and to do so, he says, he waded through all 9,000 words of the articles and "tens of thousands more words of controversy that followed." Is this Mr. Kaus's confession that he did not read the bill? Far from resolving the controversy, he only reiterated it. He raised no new issues, so my response can be brief.

Mr. Kaus declared that you would have been able to buy whatever health care you needed and pay your doctor yourself. Insisting that even the White House press office got this point wrong, he claimed that the bill did not bar doctors from taking money from patients, only from charging patients extra after billing their health plan. The text proves Kaus is mistaken. The bill (on page 237) prohibits doctors from taking money from patients for most medical services.

As for the disclaimer on page 16 of the bill, that anyone is free to buy whatever health care is needed, the remainder of the bill makes that disclaimer meaningless. The bill prohibits doctors from selling care and calls for stiff fines and penalties against doctors who do. If you limit what the seller can offer, you limit what the buyer can buy. Page 16 does not offer a way out of the Clinton's "No Exit" health care system.

Mr. Kaus conceded that the bill empowered government officials to eliminate all fee-for-service (choose your own doctor) insurance plans, but he said there was no reason to worry. Officials wouldn't actually do it if it turned out to be unpopular. Kaus forgot why we have written laws—so that our rights will not depend on the discretion and good will of public officials. Passing a law that gives government power over your health care choices—or any other part of your personal life—on the theory that the government probably won't exercise that power is obviously dangerous. In this case, it is especially unconvincing because it is the administration putting forward the bill to enlarge its own powers.

Mr. Kaus chastised me for supporting managed care for New Yorkers now that I am the state's lieutenant governor, suggesting that I opposed managed care in "No Exit." Not at all. What I did oppose was government forcing you to buy a low-budget health plan and prohibiting you from spending more.

If the Clinton bill had passed, you would have had to settle for one of the health plans selected by the government. The law would have prevented you from going outside the system to buy a costlier health plan you thought was better, even after you paid the mandatory premium (page 244). Limiting how much you can choose to pay for a health plan limits how much money is in the pot to take care of you when you're sick. The Clinton bill's price controls would have forced HMOs to sell plans below what it actually costs to provide the medical services. The bill would have made HMOs the rationers of care, denying patients the tests and specialized care they need.

The purpose of New York's new Medicaid managed care program is to increase access to care, not deny care. It will mean that a frightened teenage mother who now sits in an emergency room for thirteen hours or more with a child on her lap waiting to see a doctor she has never met and might not see again instead will have a pediatrician she can call, who has her child's medical records. In New York, HMOs will price their plans based on what they think it will actually cost to care for patients.

Despite Mr. Kaus's adversarial tone, he and I share the same goal. I want all Americans to get the health care they need, regardless of how little they can afford to pay. Last year, the public recognized the dangers of the Clinton bill and rejected it. That debate is behind us, but the goal must still be met: health care, provided with quality and compassion, for those who turn to government for help.

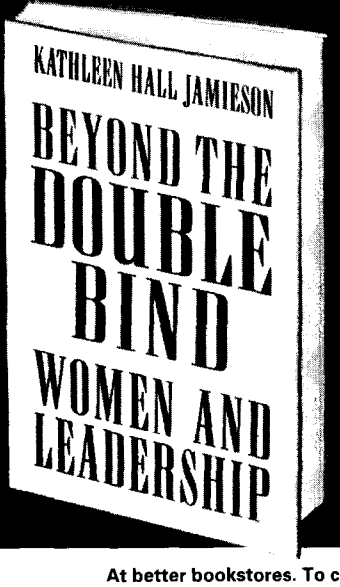
ELIZABETH MCCAUGHEY
Albany, New York

Mickey Kaus replies:

McCaughey can cite page 237 all she wants; it still doesn't say what she says it says. It decrees that a provider "may not charge or collect *from an enrollee*" an amount in excess of a health plan's fee schedule. [My italics.] The effect of this is clearly to prevent doctors from charging a health plan the set fee and then charging "an enrollee" in that plan extra. McCaughey ignores the word "enrollee" and claims, wrongly, this provision would stop you from going outside your plan to pay a doctor cash for care.

McCaughey says the bill "empowered" officials to "eliminate all fee for service" plans. Actually, the bill empowered officials to ban plans costing 20 percent above average. And what McCaughey's *article* said was that the bill "outlaws" such plans. Empowering officials to ban something is not the same thing as out-

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON



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lawing it. But I guess it's close enough for a National Magazine Award.

Wrinkled

To the editors:

As Frances Fox Piven well knows, we do not always agree with the political positions she takes ("Invasion of the Church Ladies," by Hanna Rosin, April 24). But we wonder what journalistic purpose is served by describing her as "aging" and her finger as "wrinkled." We can assure you that Frances is not a witch. She has spent her life fighting for her ideas; your readers are entitled to an account of her mind, not her body.

JYTTE KLAUSEN
ALAN WOLFE
Wellesley, Massachusetts

To the editors:

It does sometimes seem as though the left never learns. Thirty years ago we let the pro-war side monopolize the flag and we lost potential allies because we didn't sound patriotic. Since then, we have struggled to a stalemate over abortion terminology (their "pro-life/pro-abortion" versus our "pro-choice/anti-choice") but we seem to be surrendering "family values" to the right without a fight. The last time I can remember the left successfully selecting the terms which define the issues, I was 16 and wearing an "IF I WERE 21 I'D VOTE FOR JOHNSON" button.

So please, don't put a huge headline on your cover calling Congress's new female troglodytes "church ladies." As a church lady myself, I find many of my best allies in the fight for social justice in church. Also, don't knock the Sinister Six for having "yet to miss a weekly freshman Bible study": they are obviously slow learners, but if they study really hard, perhaps they may come to understand the bits about "Let justice pour down like water," or "Whatsoever you have done to the least of these my brethren," at which point we will all be better off.

ELIZABETH TWISS
Seattle, Washington

To the editors:

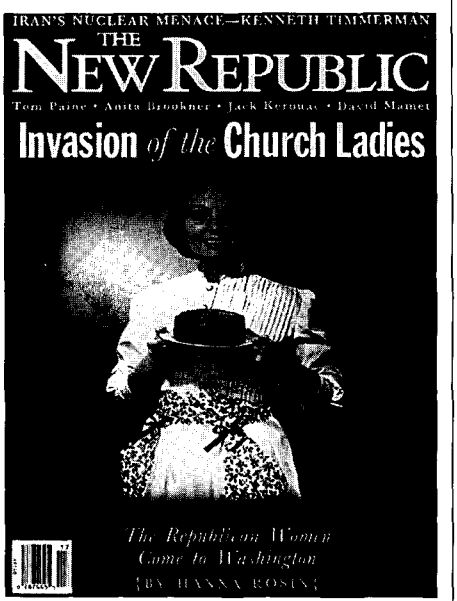
Hanna Rosin describes Walter Capps, Andrea Seastrand's opponent in the November election, as a little-known "new-age religion professor." I beg to differ. Capps is a distinguished scholar with both a national and international reputation. His course on the Vietnam War—the first such course in any American university—has enrolled 1,000 students a semester for some twenty years, has won national awards and has been featured widely in the media. His books on American religion are widely read, celebrated and taught. Neither his scholarship nor his commitments are "new-age"—perhaps Rosin is confusing him with Seastrand's predecessor's wife, Arianna Huffington? Whatever, her dismissive sobriquet obscures the full horror of Seastrand's close victory.

BARBARA DECONCINI
Atlanta, Georgia

Hate, continued.

To the editors:

Robert Wright's column "Let Them Eat Hate" (April 24) does not mention or refute the main arguments being made against the Mexican bailout. Neither does it include any mention, beyond the inflammatory headline, that the arguments


IRAN'S NUCLEAR MENACE—KENNETH TIMMERMAN
THE
NEW REPUBLIC
Tom Paine • Anita Brookner • Jack Kerouac • David Mamet
Invasion of the Church Ladies
The Republican Women
Come to Washington
[BY HANNA ROSIN]

are anti-Mexican or related to "hate." The article, instead, suggests hypocrisy in being pro-NAFTA and anti-bailout.

As I understand it, Phil Gramm and Al D'Amato are making the case that a few billion dollars will mainly help foreign investors in Mexican debt instruments and not Mexicans. I have read accounts that report that what money has gone in since the most recent peso drop has been snatched out just as fast by investors in order to close out their positions. The dollar amount may be enough to help investors, but the fundamentals of the Mexican economy and currency management will overwhelm our cash shipment and dictate Mexican well-being. Gramm and D'Amato are also making the point that bailing out what should be high-risk investments reduces the associated risk, encourages further high-default investment and therefore the likelihood of more bailouts.

There may be intelligent counterpoint to these arguments. Until then, I remain unconvinced by Wright. Furthermore, it seems to me that being pro-NAFTA and anti-bailout are consistent positions that support free, unmanipulated markets. And no one but you has suggested "hate."

MARSHALL ST. CLAIR
Providence, Rhode Island

Hitting back

To the editors:

I find it interesting that of all the opinions Mark Gerson hears from his high school students ("Race, O.J. and My Kids," April 24), including the opinion that a white woman who seduces a black man deserves to die for her crime, the one place where he would choose to draw the line is at the suggestion that a woman who physically assaults a man bears some responsibility for the violence that ensues. I would agree that attacking a physically smaller and weaker person is more reprehensible than attacking someone bigger and stronger (although the difference in strength can be, and often is, neutralized through the use of weapons and objects). But if a man who is attacked by a woman may not defend himself, and must only, in the widespread view articulated by Gerson, "at the most gently restrain her" so as not to take advantage of her "inability" to defend herself, isn't a woman who takes advantage of her mate's inability to defend himself due to internalized cultural taboos equally guilty? Or is it really all right for a woman to physically abuse a man, with the knowledge and intent that he can't, and won't, hit back?

ANNE P. MITCHELL
Palo Alto, California

Kid glove

To the editors:

In "Notebook," in the April 17 issue, you refer to Irving Kristol's apologetics for crypto-anti-Semite Pat Robertson as "a little bewildering." My, aren't we pulling our punches.

I find it more than a little bewildering that people like Edward Said, Gwendolyn Brooks, Toni Morrison and Cornel West meet with vituperative abuse in your publication, while Jewish neoconservatives like Kristol get the kid-glove treatment.

DAVID R. ADLER
New York, New York

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

State Takeovers Revisited

Several years ago, the state of New Jersey said it couldn't stand by any longer and watch the Jersey City and Paterson school districts doing a lousy job educating their students. In addition to poor student achievement, it was reported that the districts were mismanaged and corrupt. So the state came into Jersey City in 1988 and Paterson in 1991 and took over the districts' operations. It got rid of the school boards, dismissed the superintendents and proposed to do for Jersey City and Paterson what Chapter 11 is supposed to do for a business on the verge of bankruptcy. But obviously turning around a troubled urban school district is a tougher job than New Jersey had bargained for. Now, the state is having to explain why things have not worked out as planned.

Turning around a troubled urban school district is a tougher job than New Jersey bargained for.

According to a story in the *New York Times*, "Improvement Lags After School Takeovers, State Says" (April 25, 1995), State Education Commissioner Leo Klagholz admits that "academic improvement has not met expectations" in Jersey City and Paterson. But there's a reason: Klagholz says the state has given its main attention to "improving the management of the schools. 'We can't do everything at once,' he said. 'In Jersey City we have cleaned up the personnel problems and gotten rid of the patronage, but while the schools are now well managed, we didn't pay enough attention to the classroom.'"

Well, school boards have to be able to chew gum and walk at the same time. They have to be able to negotiate contracts, hire and fire teachers, take care of law suits, employ principals and select textbooks. Being competent to do one or two of these things is not enough. For Klagholz to say that the state has "concentrated" on tightening up school management and *now* it will pay attention to student achievement is ridiculous. Suppose a management firm took over a failing automobile company and announced, seven years later, that the personnel and payroll systems were finally in good shape and now they would start concentrating on trying to bring the cars up to standard. Raising student achievement was the first and most important job the state took on. It was the major justification for bypassing local school boards. If the state was not prepared to handle that, it should have limited the takeover to the areas where it was competent.

The chairman of the New Jersey Senate Education Committee, John Ewing, is sympathetic to Klagholz and the state's failure to come through on its plans and promises. Ewing's view is that "Those urban districts took a great number of years to go down and it will take years to bring them back." The picture Ewing paints is of school systems that were once terrific. Then, they started going down hill bit by bit. Every year they got a little worse until finally they crashed. Now, we have to go through the same process of building up.

What Ewing doesn't say is that these districts started out serving communities where an overwhelming majority of kids came from two-parent, intact families who had solid jobs. Gradually the population changed and these kids were replaced by children many of whom were living in poverty. The new children often had only one parent or didn't have anybody caring for them. Ewing's picture suggests that the school systems changed because the quality of the teachers and principals and school boards went down hill when the real story is that the districts used to have children who were relatively easy to teach because they came to school without the huge problems that kids in urban school districts face today.

It would be a good thing if states had the capacity to come into troubled urban school districts and set things right. They should develop that capacity. But there is currently no evidence that any state has it. A state's dissatisfaction with a school district, even if justified, does not qualify it to run the district.

Now, people at the New Jersey department of education are talking about taking over the Newark schools. On the basis of their performance in Jersey City and Paterson, they would be well advised to scale back. Perhaps they should consider appointing a financial control board similar to the one that helped pull New York City and Philadelphia out of their problems. But if they insist on going all the way, my advice is that they put the project off until they're sure they can walk and chew gum at the same time.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 22, 1995

THE CHILDREN'S PRESIDENT

There has been enough time now since the horrifying event in Oklahoma City to remark on an oddly memorable moment. On Saturday, April 22, three days after the bombing, President Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton held a session in the Oval Office with a crowd of toddlers. The First Parents told the children that they shouldn't panic because a band of maniacs in the heart of America had just bombed, among other things, a day-care center. We do not know whether the children in the Oval Office were calmed by this presidential reassurance. We certainly hope they were.

We weren't. The children's session after Oklahoma was well-intended, but it was symptomatic of a now well-established tendency in this administration literally to infantilize adult national issues. It began two years ago with the campaign to immunize all children, a laudable goal, but one which, even under the Vaccines for Children program, is still elusive. The reason for many ghetto children's poor health is not, alas, simply a lack of a new, federal entitlement. Nor is it that we don't somehow care about children enough. The reasons for this kind of child poverty—economic inequality, welfare-dependency, family breakdown, racial division, crime—are complex and, well, adult. And they can only be grappled with if adults, and not children, are the objects of policy.

The temptation to believe otherwise, however, has dogged the president for the last two years. The following is what Bill Clinton had to say about the recent Republican bill to reform welfare: "[It] punishes young children for the sins of their parents. I think that's wrong. Rich or poor, black, white or brown, in or out of wedlock, a baby is a baby, a child is a child. It's part of our future and we have an obligation to those children not to punish them for something over which they have no control." But, of course, *any* attempt to overhaul welfare will require some sanction on parents, and so possibly hurt children. Clinton's own, much better, bill, for example, would cut off welfare mothers who do not seek work after two years. This is not pleasant; and it may hurt kids; but it's indispensable if we're going to "end welfare as we know it." And the benefits of that could accrue to many, many more children in the future than those who are temporarily hurt today.

The Democratic objections to Republican spending cuts have betrayed an equally craven reflex. In the middle of a much-needed budget debate, the Democrats could only chant in unison: "school lunches." Even the debate over the right level of public funding for television was reduced to Al Gore joining Mr. Rogers in matching cardigan sweaters in a blistering attempt to defend a large, purple, velour dinosaur. Last week, the president tried to turn the judicial matter of the scope of federal power (see "Fed Up," by Jeffrey Rosen, page 13) into a children's issue. He said last Wednesday's Supreme Court ruling "could condemn more of our children to going to schools where there are guns."

Is this just clever politicking? The administration may think it's scoring political points by converting every issue into a debate over who loves children more. And maybe they're right. The Republicans, after all, have used children for years—gamely defending them from Hollywood producers, Washington bureaucrats and countercultural McGovernicks, among other menaces. But in almost every case—on both sides—the politics of children are the politics of denial: denial of the morally and politically troublesome choices involved in real welfare reform, sensible budget cutting and the right kind of government reinvention. For the president right now, such a denial is proof of both his intellectual confusion and his growing political irrelevance.

This is not to say there aren't genuine children's issues in the country today. The most glaring one is our abandonment of generational equity: accumulating massive debt that the next generation will have to pay off. But in this debate, the roles are reversed. It's our children who, as adults, will be punished; and the adults today who continue to be, well, children. It is partly to distract ourselves from that reality that kiddies are continually being thrust before the cameras and waved aloft as political pawns. Isn't it time we grew up? •

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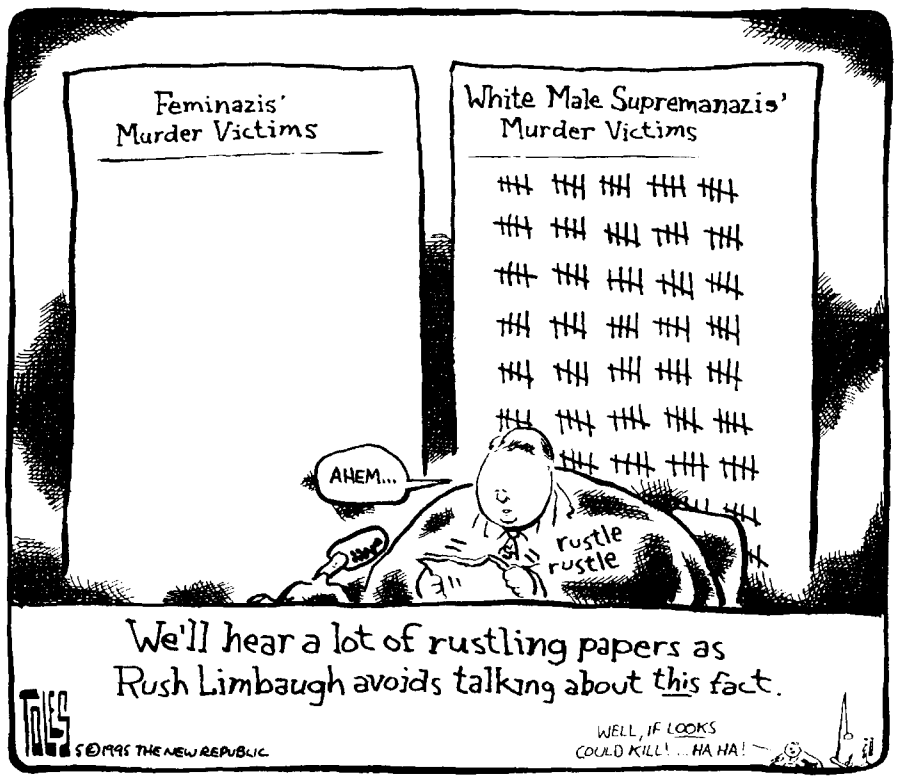
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: Matteson, Illinois, launched an advertising campaign to attract white residents.... Prosecutors in Columbus, Ohio, said they will not appeal a ruling that dismissed a child rape case because a witness was twenty minutes late.... Fred Craig, a Carvel ice cream store manager in Southington, Connecticut, was suspended without pay for refusing to write "Happy Birthday" in Spanish on a cake, instead telling the customer, "This is America."... David Duke of Logan, Utah, was given eighteen months probation for calling in a bomb threat to Ohio State University on a day he didn't feel like taking a test.... Chadron, Nebraska, officials removed an artillery shell that had been on display for four years in Robinson State Park, after they realized it was live.... New England College in Henniker, New Hampshire, suspended 19-year-old Jewish student Marcy Leibsohn for painting seventy-eight swastikas in her dorm.... Iowa Governor Terry Branstad lifted a police rule that required rape victims to take a lie detector test as a condition for beginning an investigation.... Colorado State Senator Charles Duke explained that he and his staff logged 1,500 calls to militia and anti-government groups in the past four months because he was returning their calls.


Feminazis' Murder Victims
White Male Supremanazis' Murder Victims
AHEM...
rustle rustle
We'll hear a lot of rustling papers as Rush Limbaugh avoids talking about this fact.
TALES
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WELL, IF LOOKS COULD KILL!...HA HA!

TAKE YOUR PICK: What was the political significance of the Oklahoma City bombing? It depends whose timely press release got to you first. For the Communitarian Network, the obvious lesson was: "Claims that if we introduce a few carefully crafted limitations on what individuals may do, we will slide down a slippery slope into a 'police state,' ignore history and experience." The Libertarian Party warned that the Omnibus Anti-Terrorism Act "is a license for government agencies to investigate political groups and causes almost at will." The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws pointed out that "it is the narcocracy, not some 'new world order,' that is the real and present danger to our liberty." The Zionist Organization of America argued that Clinton's "remarks following the Oklahoma City bombing ... could even more easily have been ... about how Yasir Arafat's constant use of rhetoric encourages terrorism in the Mideast." And Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership Inc., after denouncing the "post-Oklahoma feeding frenzy on militia groups," warned that gun control is "a policy that has cleared the way for seven major genocides in which 56 million persons—including millions of children—have been murdered."

NEWT WATCH: When Newt Gingrich launched his anti-bureaucracy crusade in January, he promised to institute "Corrections Day." On this day, once a month, the House would cut through one piece of pointless federal red tape. "For years, businesses of all sizes have voiced concerns and objections to the high cost and abundance of regulations they are subjected to, which make little sense, but are required by law." Because it bypasses the normal hearings process, the scrapped rules, he promised, would be noncontroversial—things like the size requirements on vacuum tubes and buckets. But judging by the list of recommendations released on May 2, it seems the speaker has a peculiar notion of noncontroversial. His first proposal is to grant a permanent exemption to San Diego from a Clean Water Act rule on dumping sewage in the Pacific Ocean, an idea strongly opposed by the Environmental Protection Agency. The Act requires sewage treatment plants to provide secondary treatment to filter out harmful chemicals before they drift into streams. It also allows an exemption for coastal cities if they can prove that less treatment would do the job. In 1986, San Diego applied for a waiver, but was rejected by the Reagan administration because contamination was found at diving sites off the coast. Also, the rule does not cost the city anything like the $10 billion Gingrich claims it does. He is using an estimate which included planned overhaul of the treat-

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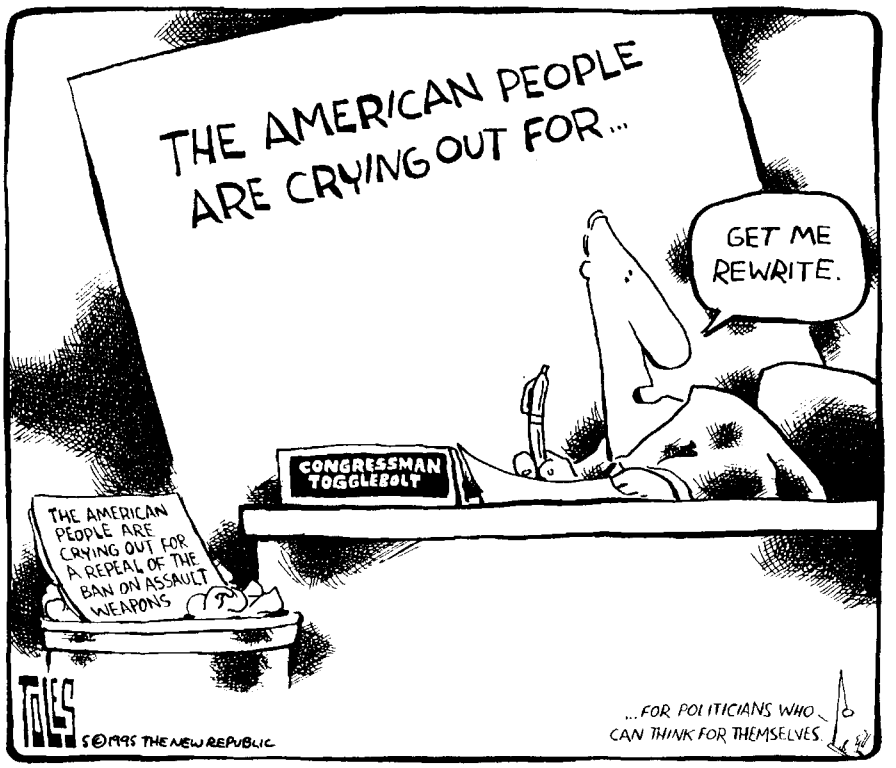
ment plant in 2000. Besides, the federal government picks up half the cost. The rest of the speaker's suggestion list—which includes things like wildlife protection and anti-monopoly laws—is just as suspect. Apparently the criterion of a regulation that "makes little sense" is simply one that makes little sense to Newt Gingrich.

UPWARD FAILURE: Maybe the paranoids of the Michigan Militia have a point, after all. Last week, Attorney General Janet Reno promoted the architect of one of the most egregious recent bunglings of federal power to the number two position at the FBI. Larry Potts supervised the 1992 Idaho siege of white separatist, Randy Weaver, during which the FBI shot dead Weaver's wife and injured his son. A month ago, Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick censured Potts for botching the Idaho stakeout. In 1993, Potts's career reached a new peak with the Waco siege, which left more than eighty people dead. The only independent report on that incident, from the Treasury Department in 1993, was scathing in its criticism of the FBI's handling of it. Yet Janet Reno described Potts last Wednesday as "an extraordinary agent, a dedicated law enforcement official." There are, we suppose, two ways to interpret this decision: *(a)* government departments are routinely immune to criticism and often appoint failures to higher and higher positions; or *(b)* the Justice Department and the FBI are, for some reason, choosing to escalate their conflict with the Weavers and Koreshes of this world by appointing their nemesis to the second-highest position in the FBI.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...FOR POLITICIANS WHO CAN THINK FOR THEMSELVES

JUDICIAL ACTIVISM:

Court Rules Boxer Shorts Are Indeed Underwear

—*Journal of Commerce*, April 20

(Thanks to Jim Prout of New York, New York.)

THE EXCITEMENT NEVER STOPS:

Americans getting older all the time

—*The Monroe Evening Times*, April 27

Cuff link collectors to meet

—*The Houston Chronicle*, April 23

(Thanks to Kathryn Hill of Monroe, Wisconsin, and William Hyland of Houston, Texas.)

ON THE OTHER HAND: After two years of lamenting President Clinton's failure to appoint scholars to the federal courts, we're delighted to note that he last week nominated U.C.-Berkeley's William Fletcher to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Fletcher is the most impressive scholar of federal jurisdiction in the country. His path-breaking articles on sovereign immunity and federal common law have transformed the debates in those fields; and his work is marked by the kind of careful historical and textual analysis that should serve as a model for liberals and conservatives alike. If confirmed, Fletcher will join his mother, Betty, on the Ninth Circuit; but his judicial philosophy is more restrained than hers. We hope he is confirmed as swiftly as possible.

HOME NEWS: We have two new senior editors this week. Neither is a stranger to TNR. Michael Lind, formerly a senior editor at *Harper's*, gained notoriety this year for exposing Pat Robertson's anti-Semitism, in a review in *The New York Review of Books*. He'll publish his first, brilliantly provocative book, *The Next American Nation* (The Free Press), on July 4. John B. Judis, formerly a contributing editor, has written for TNR for a decade. His profiles—most recently of Christine Todd

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Whitman and Ron Brown—are models of judicious analysis. His broader essays on American history, religion and conservatism have long enriched our pages. We're proud to welcome them both. We're also glad to announce that we've just renewed our contract for New Republic Books with Basic Books, a division of HarperCollins. Basic publishes serious books which are not deadly and timely books which are not superficial. The editor of the imprint is Paul Golob, an experienced and discerning hand, who can be reached at 212-207-7715. •

COURT WATCH

FED UP

By Jeffrey Rosen

It was a coincidence, of course, that exactly a week after the Oklahoma bombing, the Supreme Court struck down the Gun Free School Zones Act of 1990, holding that Congress had exceeded its enumerated powers for the first time since the New Deal. Nevertheless, some commentators are treating the two events as if they were portentously linked. In both cases, the argument goes, right-wing zealots (Timothy McVeigh, Chief Justice William Rehnquist) struck a mad blow at a federal government they perceive to be bloated, despotic and out of control.

In fact, the *Lopez* decision is good news for liberal constitutionalists. The mindless impulse to federalize crimes that the states are prosecuting perfectly well on their own has been, in recent years, more of a Republican than a Democratic vice. And as well as being constitutionally defensible, the Court's decision should slow the political momentum behind some of the more reckless proposals to expand federal powers over tort and criminal law in the 104th Congress.

If any law falls outside the limits of Congress's power to "regulate Commerce ... among the several States," the Gun Free School Zones Act is it. Passed in 1990 as part of Congress's biannual Elizabethan ritual of making new federal crimes out of activities that are already criminal under state law, the Act prohibits the *possession* of a gun within 1,000 feet of a school. Bringing a gun to school is already a crime in forty states; in fact, Alfonso Lopez, a twelfth grader in San Antonio, Texas, was initially charged under Texas law. The state charges were dropped the next day, however, when he was charged instead with violating the federal Gun Free School Zones Act. But possessing a gun is not a commercial activity; and any effects on commerce relate to the use of firearms, not to possession itself. Furthermore, there is no uniquely federal interest involved—except for the purely symbolic interest of congressional Democrats and Republicans in appearing simultaneously tough on crime and tenderhearted on children.

In his opinion striking down the law, Chief Justice Rehnquist properly rejected the Clinton administration's sweeping argument that Congress has the power to regulate *any* activity that has a hypothetical effect on commerce. Instead, Rehnquist concluded that "the proper test requires an analysis of whether the regulated activity 'substantially affects' interstate commerce." The only problem with this nebulous test is that it might be a license for the kind of broad judicial discretion conservatives are supposed to reject. The distinction between substantial and insubstantial effects on commerce can't be easily discerned by judges. And the Court runs the risk of creating a new cottage industry in federalism litigation, as it did in the *Dolan* property rights decision last year. *Dolan*, too, questioned the boundaries of the regulatory state without providing very clear guidance to judges about *when* the state must compensate property owners whose land is regulated.

Is there a less subjective alternative to these mushy judicial tests? The most radical approach comes from the chambers of Clarence Thomas, in a lone concurrence that no other justice was moved to acknowledge. Quoting eighteenth-century dictionaries, Thomas insists that "at the time the original Constitution was ratified, 'commerce' consisted of selling, buying and bartering, as well as transporting for these purposes." In a comically overconfident tone, combining self-congratulation with sneering attacks on all of his colleagues and predecessors, Thomas concludes that Congress should be prohibited from legislating outside a few narrow categories of enumerated powers. There are only two problems with Thomas's argument. The first is that it is lifted, almost word for word in places, from a 1987 article by Richard Epstein, "The Proper Scope of the Commerce Power," which Thomas mysteriously fails to cite. The second is that it would invalidate large portions of the federal government and the administrative state. Perhaps for this reason, Thomas concludes with a deadpan concession (also borrowed from Epstein) that because of "reliance interests," it may be "too late in the day" to "wipe the slate clean."

The main dissent, by Stephen Breyer, can hardly be criticized for concealing its sources. It includes an appendix of 167 scholarly reports and articles, from Robert Reich to Jonathan Kozol, that Breyer exhaustively canvasses to establish the proposition that "gun related violence is a commercial as well as a human problem," as long as commerce is viewed not as a "technical legal conception" but as a "practical one." There is a "direct economic link between basic education and industrial productivity," Breyer argues; and Congress could reasonably have con-

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cluded, based on empirical evidence, that "guns and education are incompatible."

There is a hint of Louis Brandeis in Breyer's dissent, which is one of the most impressive maiden opinions in recent years. But it is not, ultimately, entirely convincing. Breyer is writing as the consummate Senate staffer, collecting the empirical evidence to write the definitive committee report that Congress was too lazy to write on its own. And yet, after all of his labors, Breyer never quite answers Rehnquist's central objection. He is unable to identify a single law that Congress would be unable to pass under his vision of the commerce power, for he defines "commerce" so broadly that it would include any law that is hypothetically related to promoting the national economy. It would be easy enough, for example, to collect lots of empirical evidence suggesting that high divorce rates tend to interfere with national productivity. But does Breyer think that Congress has the power to pass a federal marriage law?

Breyer is right that the *Lopez* opinion "threatens legal uncertainty"; but uncertainty is the unavoidable consequence of judicially enforced limits on Congress's powers. The question is whether the Court has the will or the votes to go much further down this path. Its timid decision to duck the constitutional issue in a related case decided days after *Lopez* suggests little inclination to carry Rehnquist's vision of the commerce clause to its logical conclusion. One possibility is that the *Lopez* test will prove so amorphous that the Court will abandon the search for substantive limits on Congress's power, and will return instead to more procedural rules for protecting the interests of states. Anthony Kennedy and Sandra Day O'Connor suggest in their concurrence, for example, that Congress can legislate in areas traditionally left to the states, as long as it expresses its intentions clearly and goes through the motions of collecting factual findings to establish an empirical connection with commerce. As Glenn Reynolds of the University of Tennessee argues, Congress can satisfy most of O'Connor's and Kennedy's concerns in the future by including in every law a clear statement of the constitutional power on which it claims to rest.

The obvious losers in the wake of *Lopez* are statist conservatives, whose addiction to passing federal laws for purely symbolic purposes has now been called into question. Consider the flag burning law, which Rehnquist voted to uphold on First Amendment grounds, but which he would presumably have to strike down under the commerce clause as exceeding Congress's enumerated powers. The Drug Free Schools Act, which makes simple possession of drugs a federal crime, is now vulnerable to constitutional attack for precisely the same reason as the Gun Free School Zones Act. So is the cop killer bullets law, at least to the degree that it prohibits possession of bullets, rather than their manufacture and sale.

Federal judges may be reluctant, in the end, to extend *Lopez* very far, for fear of provoking a dramatic reprise of 1937. But the real significance of the decision may be political, not legal: it could frighten the 104th Congress itself. The intellectual hypocrisy of the Contract with America has been its tendency, despite anti-Federalist rhetoric, to federalize areas of tort and criminal law that have traditionally been left to the states. Perhaps, in light of *Lopez*, conscientious Republicans and Democrats in the Senate will think twice before passing bills that have only the flimsiest relation to interstate commerce, such as the D'Amato Amendment, which would federalize all state crimes involving the use of a gun, or aspects of the products liability act, which would federalize state tort law.

We are, as Bruce Ackerman of Yale argues, on the threshold of a constitutional moment. If the Republican congressional victories in 1994 are followed by a Republican presidential victory in 1996, then the boundaries of the regulatory state could be constricted for the first time since the New Deal; and the *Lopez* decision could be a harbinger rather than a judicial aberration. But Republicans in Congress have not yet decided whether they are for the expansion of federal power, or against it. Rather than waiting for judges to save them from their centralizing instincts, perhaps they will remember the cautions of the Rehnquist Court, and exercise self-restraint. •

CROATIA POSTCARD

GUNS AND PIGS

By Samantha Power

ZAGREB

Last month, normalization between Croatia and the rebel Serbs who hold nearly one-third of the country hit its propitious peak. Thanks to the December opening of the Highway of Brotherhood and Unity, connecting Zagreb and Belgrade, Croatians waved nervously at their old Serb neighbors as they floored it through a seventeen-mile strip of Serb-controlled motorway, and the destitute Serb rebels overturned their mattresses and piggy banks, wandered across the

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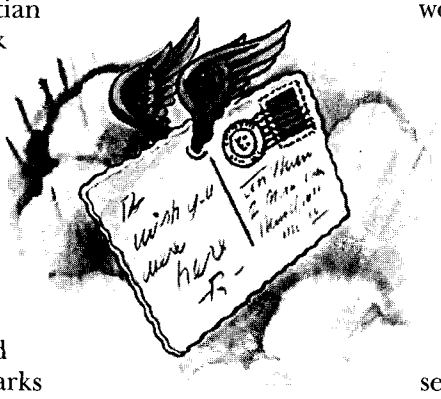
front line to a Croatian-controlled petrol station, exchanged their marks for the feared Croatian *kuna* currency (a relic of Croatia's Nazi-phile days) and stocked up on fuel, coffee and Levis.

Mate Bulic, a Croatian Army captain witnessing the scene, was unimpressed. He glared at the Serbs around him and pointed across the fields at a distant smokestack. "The Serbs have my home, and I won't get it back with your meaningless negotiations," he spat, vowing "I'll get there with these boots and this gun." Last week, thanks to the largest Croatian offensive since 1991, Bulic did just that.

Anyone who thought material incentives could dull the pain of land losses or the passion behind territorial claims in the Balkans just got a hefty reality check. As the Europhilic country was beginning to gain some clout in Western capitals, the Croatian special forces barged into a "United Nations Protected Area," reclaimed their lost land, and elicited bloody retribution.

Before the multipronged Croatian advance, the country did not look like one itching for a fight. The capital, Zagreb, had come to resemble a diminutive Vienna. Scaffolding had come down to reveal Hapsburg façades coated in Maria Theresa's favorite yellow hue, precious artworks and sculptures had been unearthed from vaults and musty basements for display, fountains had sprouted amid the shrubbery of downtown parks and McDonald's had at last reserved a plot on the main square. On the coast, foreign tourists who realized that Serb occupation was no occupational hazard, were creeping back to deserted Adriatic pearls with pockets laden with hard cash. And, thanks to a landmark economic accord with rebel Serbs, the highway had opened (despite the conspicuous absence of brotherhood and unity) and relations had started to thaw slightly. When journalists joined the Serbs on their turf, the wistfully titled parcel of Croatia known as "Republic of Serbian Krajina," we were interrogated—but only for descriptions of life on the stunning Croatian coast; and berated—but only for forgetting to bring the Croatian newspapers we pledged.



In fact, from the point of view of Western diplomats intent on strangling and sanctioning the Krajina Serbs into submitting to Croatian rule, all was going according to plan. Croatians were lunging forward into Europe, rebel Serbs were crawling backward, and the power of the purse looked destined to someday unite both in a land of milk and honey. But the aerial view was deceiving. Politicians on both sides of the front line were destined only to drag their punch-drunk constituents back to the battlefield.

Before the attack, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman was growing increasingly worried that the West had gotten too used to Croatia's division. Since the 1991 Croat-Serb war left 10,000 Croatians dead and 350,000 displaced, Croatia, the older sibling, had been shunted aside for the newborn Bosnia. The ubiquitous international mediators had devoted their attentions to Sarajevo, and Tudjman had concluded that time was not on his side. So he struck.

There had been omens. In January, Tudjman demanded that the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) leave the area, saying the departure of the peacekeepers would "speed up the peace process," code here, often enough, for launching a war. UNPROFOR, Tudjman charged (accurately), was simply "freezing Serb gains." Though the blue helmets were also preserving a truce, when Tudjman handed them their walking papers, 84 percent of the Croatian public hailed his move. They cheerily ignored the fact that the U.N. accounted for 6 percent to 8 percent of Croatia's GDP and that, according to almost half of those polled, war would inevitably follow—a war that the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith warned would "have all the civility of the war in Bosnia with ten times the firepower."

When Tudjman announced the U.N. had to go, he boldly informed the world that his decision was "final." "We have an independent policy, we aren't the servants of the international community," he said, "The U.N. is a nuisance to us." His ministers were dispatched on speaking tours. The message: this time, Croatia is serious; the edict is "non-negotiable." In Sarajevo at the time, I discussed the matter with a prominent member of the Bosnian presidency, suggesting "maybe this time Tudjman means it." I was instantly admonished for my credulity. "Don't you get it?" I was told, "Tudjman doesn't have the balls to kick the U.N. out. Your country will give him some loan at the last minute, and he'll change his mind." Thankfully, two months later, the United States did come running. The American "peace processors" were Galbraith, Assistant Secretary of State for Europe Richard Holbrooke and, back in the game after an extended and disappointing hiatus, Vice President Al Gore. They pushed, and Tudjman, who has threatened to expel peacekeepers almost as often as Serbs have besieged safe areas, caved.

For a time. According to some, Tudjman had actually expected the mere cry of "wolf" to scare Serbian strongman Milosevic into recognizing Croatia within its borders. Had he forgotten who scares whom in this part of the world? "I wish I could get my hands on whatever Tudjman was smoking," said one senior diplomat. More likely, the Croatian leader simply hoped that by shaking up the Balkan brew, something might turn up.

In the end Tudjman's climb-down won him World

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Bank loans, a European trade accord, the prospect of Partnership for Peace membership, a "new and improved" trimmed U.N. force and, for one brief period, the coveted spotlight. But it was clear that, without a radical Serb change of heart, the optimistically-named U.N. Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) would only serve to prettify the status quo. It would most likely be unable to repatriate a single Croatian refugee or reintegrate a single square inch of Croatian land. So, before calling elections, Tudjman opted to send away the tourists and send in the tanks.

Tudjman's immediate enemy in this battle is the breakaway Serb republic in Croatia. It is comprised of ex-Yugoslavia's "other" Serb rebels: men and women, old and young, dressed in a rainbow of army greens and blues, who relentlessly remind visitors (largely in order to reassure one another) that "never, ever, ever again" will they be part of Croatia. Milan Babic is the cunning, pudgy informal leader. Wearing a brown blazer with wine-colored shoes and trousers, the local "foreign minister" kicked back on a chic recliner several days before the latest outbreak of fighting. Like most offices in Knin, the Krajina "capital," he displayed the "state" flag and a glistening crest adorned with four gold-crusted S's, "*Samo Sloga Sbrina Spasava*," or "Only Unity Saves the Serbs." Though there hasn't been much unity among Serbs recently, Babic warned that a Croatian offensive would surely expedite the formal creation of a "less Greater Serbia." "If the Croats attack us, and our state is jeopardized," he cautioned, "we will have no choice but to unite with Serbs elsewhere."

With a history of hardy militancy, Croatia's historic *krajina*, or "frontier" region, is said to boast "more pigs than men, more guns than pigs." Since the 1991 fighting, war has been the sole industry, employing up to 90 percent of the sparse population in the civilian and military sectors. Locals say infants emerge from the womb yearning for weapons, not bottles. "We love to fight," explains Sava, a Serb soldier in Vojnic, a town that translates literally as "military." "It is in the blood." The Serbs recite the lines Babic has helped teach them: that no matter how abject and one-dimensional their lives in isolation may be and regardless of the human costs of another round of war, full statehood is their only salvation. But these proud warriors did not fare very well last week, losing almost the entire knob-like enclave they controlled southeast of Zagreb, including "their" portion of the highway. They paid the price for dispatching units next door to rescue the ailing Bosnian Serbs, who were reeling from recent Bosnian Muslim and Croat army successes.

"We are small people. The government knows best," sighed Mirko, a 58-year-old Croatian, as his wife Ruzica served a plate of smoked ham and goat cheese, and cajoled me into the obligatory swig of slivovitz. Everything was homemade, including the house, which Mirko had rebuilt from scratch last year. This couple is the first to dare to return to Kukunjevac, a tiny bombed-out front-line village sixty miles southeast of Zagreb, which was once 90 percent Serb. Theirs is the only chimney for miles puffing life into a neighborhood whose architectural layout resembles that of roofless Dresden in 1945. Since March 1994, when Jordanian blue helmets settled in between Mirko's deserted home and the Serb forces across the fields, the shelling and sniping of years past has stopped. But, without the companionship of their Serb friends, he and his wife live alone with the ghosts of the past and rubble reminders of better days. Though Tudjman "knew best," I knew they knew they'd be the first to pay the price of his wisdom.

"Have UNPROFOR done a good job here in Croatia?" I asked Mirko.

"No, they've done nothing."

"I see. Didn't they help cement the cease-fire?"

"Yes."

"Is that nothing?"

"No."

"Do you want UNPROFOR to leave?"

"Yes."

"Should Croatia fight the Serbs to get its territory back?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Our army isn't ready, I'd lose my home again ... and my sons would have to go and fight."

"Do you support your government's decision to expel the peacekeepers?"

"Of course."

"Do you want war?"

"Of course not."

"Will there be a war if UNPROFOR leaves?"

"Yes, naturally."

Because a small-timers' Mutually Assured Destruction currently prevails and the likely gains of war do not outweigh the inevitable and proven costs for either side, all-out war in Croatia is not immediately likely. Even if diplomats can secure a dénouement and round one is concluded, however, the prospects for a political deal are bleak. The rebel Serbs insist on statehood; Croatia has so far resisted proposals to offer them even significant autonomy.

As a result, the Croatian Army will use the time between now and November 30, when the unfulfillable new U.N. mandate ends, to refurbish its heavy weapons stocks, and Serb guns will remain cocked. Tudjman is aging and nervous. The 72-year-old wants desperately to be remembered as the "Father of Croatia"—not as the father of a partitioned country with an asterisk beside it. Last week's foray was the beginning of a new attempt to remove that asterisk.

SAMANTHA POWER is a writer based in Zagreb. She has been covering the war in the former Yugoslavia since July 1993.

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THE NOMENKLATURA CAPITALISTS

By Martin Malia

As the major Western leaders head for Moscow to stand beside Boris Yeltsin at the May 9 victory parade, the Western public is increasingly distressed by the turn of Russian "reform." State corruption, a brazen mafia, assassination on Moscow's streets, an atrophied Parliament, a bibulous presidential authoritarianism, a truculent resistance to NATO expansion and above all the Chechnya war—doesn't all this mean the failure of Russia's "transition to democracy and the market"? Indeed, doesn't the historical record prove that "eternal Russia" can only revert to autocracy, chauvinism and imperialism?

Before we leap to categorical conclusions, we would do well to situate Russia's current problems in some longer perspective. And for the first time, this is possible: enough years have passed since the Communist Party's collapse for post-Communism to have a history, and for this history to yield a pattern.

It is now clear that the post-Communist story falls into two main phases. The first extends from the August Revolution of 1991 to the December elections of 1993 and was dominated by the struggle for a politically and economically liberal, "Westernizing" Russia. The second phase extends from the unanticipated "red-brown" breakthrough in those elections to the debacle of the Chechnya war. This period may now fairly be characterized as a time of creeping restoration of Soviet structures and methods.

The key to understanding the partial failure of the "Westernizing" drive of 1992-1993 lies in the tenuousness of the "democrats'" victory in August 1991. For though the revolution had ended Communism, the Communists were still very much there. The central organs of the party and the Soviet state had been amputated, but the local limbs and sinews of the old system survived intact—in the military-industrial nomenklatura, the rural kolkhozes, the army and the police, the newly independent republics and the provincial governments and ethnic "autonomies" within the Russian Federation.

Arrayed against this old red network was a heterogeneous group of liberal intellectuals and former party hands who, whether out of conviction or opportunism, joined the democratic revolution. This group was always a minority, but under the impact of Communism's abject failure, in 1992-1993, it was able to put through "shock-therapy" price liberalization and begin privatization. To recall the initial mixed results: shortages and lines disappeared and the Russian economy was monetized for the first time since 1929 (some would say since 1918); on the other hand, the Central Bank, still controlled by the old Supreme Soviet, disbursed lavish credits to unprofitable state enterprises; inflation soared, pensions were devalued and savings wiped out.

More disturbing still, it turned out that liberalization included liberty for crime. With the restraining hand of the KGB loosened, the once-illegal Soviet "shadow economy" came out into the open as the "mafia," while the partial corruption of the Soviet administration turned into the wholesale corruption of its Russian successor. For the transition to the market was not, and could not have been, accompanied by a correspondingly rapid reform of the legal system, the police, the banks and the mentality of the population. Chronic inflation and the mafia were thus the first surprises of the "transition."

Could things have gone more smoothly? The answer to this lies in the political struggles of 1992-1993, and is almost certainly no. To recall the dilemma of those years: hardly had Yegor Gaidar's "kids in short pants" begun their reform, when the Communist forces defeated in August 1991 turned the Supreme Soviet into an instrument of systematic obstruction. In an attempt to appease these forces, Yeltsin sacrificed Gaidar in December 1992 and took as his successor one of their number, Victor Chernomyrdin, who vowed to rein in "market romanticism."

In exchange, the Supreme Soviet agreed to a referendum defining the president's powers. But in the new year the legislators reneged on this agreement and attempted to remove Yeltsin. He therefore tried to disband Parliament, then settled for a referendum, which supported his reforms. The Supreme Soviet, nonetheless, annulled the budget implementing them. To end the impasse, in September Yeltsin disbanded the legislature; when the most radical deputies answered in early October with an attempted insurrection, they were

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reduced by tank fire. Although democratic, i.e. electoral, legitimacy lay with Yeltsin, and though government with such a legislature had become impossible, resolving a constitutional dispute by force inevitably tarnished the idea of democracy as such in the eyes of the population.

In the December 1993 elections for a new legislature, the Duma and a post-Soviet constitution, Yeltsin's presidential constitution narrowly passed, but Gaidar's and other reform parties wound up as a divided minority, while Vladimir Zhirinovsky's ultra-nationalists and the revived Communists and their Agrarian allies received almost half the vote. This was the second surprise of the "transition": democratic elections and parliamentary government could produce antidemocratic results and, just as bad, confusion, disorder and instability.

The shock of the December 1993 elections thus inaugurated a second phase of post-Communist development. Both Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin concluded that the time for dramatic reform was over, and that the nationalist-cum-nomenklatura forces had to be accommodated. Gaidar and his successor as chief economic strategist, Boris Fedorov, were dropped from the government, while Oleg Lobov, an old party crony of Yeltsin and enemy of the market, became first deputy prime minister for the economy and then head of the new Security Council.

Elsewhere, though, reformers remained in power. Anatoli Chubais stayed in charge of privatization, becoming first deputy prime minister for the economy, and another economic liberal, Yevgni Yasin, became minister of finance. The conflicts between these various appointments sometimes amounted to what *Isvestiia*'s leading commentator, Otto Latsis, calls "governmental schizophrenia."

But this wasn't the only confusion aboard the ship of state. By early 1994, Russia—or more exactly Moscow—had developed two new central bureaucracies: the government of Chernomyrdin in the old parliamentary White House and the presidency of Yeltsin in the former premises of the Central Committee on Old Square just down the street from the Kremlin. Both administrations harbor various competing interest groups, both are reputedly larger than their Soviet predecessors and both are quite certainly peopled with old Central Committee hands.

A prime example of this growing fragmentation of power is the now notorious case of Moscow Mayor Iuri Luzhkov and his battle with Yeltsin's chief guardian, Aleksandr Korzhakov. A former party apparatchik in Moscow, Luzhkov has presidential ambitions. He also has close links with Vladimir Gusinsky, a one-time theatrical agent and founder of the Most Bank, which grew rich by managing city funds from the privatization of municipal property. Gusinsky also started the pro-business, liberal paper, *Sevodnia*, as well as the independent television station NTV, to compete with the government's station. Faithful Korzhakov took umbrage at this challenge to his boss Yeltsin, so last December his guards beat up Gusinsky's private police in front of city hall—just the way the KGB would have handled a challenge to authority in the old days. Gusinsky now lives in London and dares not return. At the same time, Luzhkov is still very much mayor, and it cannot be said that Yeltsin is truly master in his capital.

And this is only the situation in Moscow, which for all its overlapping bureaucracies does not, and cannot, really govern the country. From highly autonomous St. Petersburg to the almost independent Maritime Province of the Far East, local authorities set their own economic policies, sometimes liberal, sometimes para-Soviet, and send or refuse to send tax revenues to Moscow or recruits to the army for the Chechnya war. Thus the showcase of economic liberalism, Nizhny Novgorod province, eschews price controls and auctions off state property, with the result that, though prices rise, prosperity grows even more rapidly; meanwhile the apparatchik governor of neighboring Ulianov province keeps prices low and stable, with the result that Novgorodians flock there to buy cheap goods, undermining Ulianov's false security. In this antagonistic symbiosis we find in microcosm the dynamic of the most basic "transition" from the old Russia to the new.

The great dynamo of this process has been the program of wholesale privatization of state enterprises carried out by Chubais. Launched in the fall of 1992, it triggered the resistance that led to Chernomyrdin's appointment; accelerated in 1993, it fueled the increasingly acute crises of that year. Yet, despite all obstacles, it is now largely completed. Vouchers were given to the population, who could use them to buy shares in state enterprises reorganized as corporations. The result is that almost all of Russia's commerce and small business was sold off and some 65 percent of large-scale industry was privatized, a higher percentage than in either Poland or the Czech Republic.

Initially this system was intended to distribute ownership "democratically," that is, in part at least, to the general population. This largely proved to be the case for small retail outlets, shops and services. Most big industry, however, wound up in the hands of the industrial nomenklatura, often in official association with its workers. Yet, in fact, the old managers remained dominant and the workers, in the old Soviet manner, were still dependent for their marginal well-being on the paternalistic enterprise—which is why there are almost no strikes in Russia. More often than not these enterprises were linked to a new bank that in fact stood in for one of the old ministries.

This hybrid result is now often referred to in Russia as "nomenklatura capitalism," and its emergence has been the final great surprise of the "transition." Liberal intellectuals, in particular, are bitter about this outcome, because it was they who had spearheaded the overthrow of Sovietism only to find themselves marginalized by cynical apparatchiki, vulgar *biznesmany* and criminal mafiosi.

And, in the New Russia, nomenklatura capitalists, the mafia and corrupt state officialdom do overlap. This is

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because the stakes of privatization are so huge, while the weakness of the state is so great, that wholesale privatization has produced a grand national free-for-all. The privatization of Russia's national plant in three years has been the greatest transfer (one might almost say giveaway) of wealth in history. And it occurred at a time when the collapse of Soviet structures left the state with only a rudimentary judicial system and an unreliable police force, and thus with little institutional leverage to monitor the distribution. The result has been that managers, who, often, were also political figures, could accumulate vouchers and appropriate state property quite legally. And when one such group came in conflict with a rival, the matter would often be resolved by mafia intervention. To protect against this, all major interest groups had to develop security forces, veritable small private armies.

BORIS YELTSIN BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Could it have been done otherwise? Again, the answer is probably not. First of all, in 1992-1993 the old red network put up such ferocious resistance to reform that its wishes had to be taken into account if there was to be any privatization at all; besides, the nomenklatura managers had the workers in their paternalistic pockets. Secondly, who else could have bid for the loot? Foreigners would have been wary of such massive investment in such an unstable country, if indeed they had been allowed to buy up so much of Russia. And the average Ivan had neither the resources nor the technical competence to take over large-scale state property.

In other words, given the Soviet heritage, to create a "capitalism" that would not be nomenklatura-dominated was structurally unfeasible. Speed, moreover, even at the cost of major compromises with the old order, was vital if there was to be any transition at all. The evidence is now overwhelming that in a "gradual" transition from Communism the nomenklatura opts to change nothing at all and the economy sinks ever deeper into decline. The great case in point is Ukraine, where after three years of post-Soviet disintegration President Leonid Kuchma was forced to adopt the Russian course.

So, though Gaidar and Chubais did not achieve success as defined by an ideal model of a market economy, they did accomplish what was possible under post-Soviet conditions. Nomenklatura capitalism is hardly a satisfactory state, but it is far better than nomenklatura socialism.

What are the positive results in Russia so far? They are not to be found in an improved economic "performance" but in a restructuring of economic mechanisms and mentalities. Yes, GNP crashed by one-half between 1989 and 1994, and inflation soared. But much of the lost GNP was in useless products or military equipment; and inflation is finally shrinking. In early 1995 Chernomyrdin brought inflation down from 17 percent per month to its present 7.8 percent. Two years ago, Chernomyrdin and the nomenklatura did not believe, or understand, that low inflation and a real budget are important. Now they know both are essential if the economy is to revive. As a sign of this new restraint, after the ruble's crash last October, the government finally replaced the spendthrift Viktor Gerashchenko as director of the Central Bank with the competent technician, Tatiana Paramonova.

The prospect of an upturn is all the more plausible since it is clear that a lot of people are getting rich in Russia. Though we hear much of the new indigence of the population, of retirement pensions destroyed and of 30 percent of the nation living below the poverty line, it is also true that New Russians are successful entrepreneurs. Like erstwhile petro-Arabs, they have become lavish spenders in the world's luxury spots from the Riviera to California. In 1994 $20 billion in new

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How drunk is Boris?

The only things Russians like better than either drinking or talking about drinking is doing both at the same time. At a restaurant in Cheliabinsk, a city in the Urals, a local pollster and a visiting politician talk about the most famous man from this region, President Boris Yeltsin. "He cursed a lot," says the pollster, who knew Yeltsin as a regional party boss. "But you know what? He never drank."

"That was thirty years ago," responds the politician, a former Yeltsin cabinet member.

"I mean, he drank, of course," clarifies the pollster. "But he drank along with everyone else. When the glasses were filled, he drank. But he never got trashed."

"He still drinks along with everyone else. It's just that it takes nothing for him to get crocked."

They empty their shot glasses. So do I, the journalist, because in this country everyone drinks. It's not just a matter of Russian cultural identity or the West's stereotype of Russia. How much, what and how the nation is drinking are keys to the mood of the people. The key to individual character, though, is not how much but how well you drink.

A new government study shows that the average Russian consumes eight liters of pure alcohol a year; the World Health Organization considers more than three liters to be unsafe. Since the beginning of the decade when Mikhail Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign came to a close, vodka consumption has gone up 136 percent, reaching an all-time high.

To drink along with everyone else, then, is to drink often and heavily. So it is only right that the first democratically elected president, a pathological populist, would do just that—especially since the man he replaced, who was always far more popular in the West than at home, had waged a brutal battle against alcohol, artificially creating shortages and precipitating a drastic drop in the consumption of alcohol (at least of the sort that was sold legally for human consumption). When how much the president drinks becomes too much is a matter of opinion—public opinion.

Rumors of Yeltsin's love of drink have circulated as long as he has been a major political player. The first federal-level attempt to discredit him by publicizing his drinking habit dates back to 1990, when he was removed from his post as the head of the Moscow Communist Party organization. One of the documents that surfaced when CPSU archives were opened in 1991 directed functionaries to play up the theme. Instances of indiscreet intemperance are said to include: Yeltsin's incoherent speech made during a visit to the United States in 1989; his chronic absences from Supreme Soviet sessions in early 1991; his demeanor in Moscow on the eve of the 1991 coup and his alleged stupor throughout the armed power struggle of October 1993; his failure to meet with several foreign ministers and the chairman of the International Olympic Committee in Moscow in 1992; his apparent difficulty in walking during a CIS summit in Tashkent in 1992; his attempt to supplant an orchestra conductor in Germany; his failure to get off the plane in Shannon to meet with the Irish premier; and an alleged drinking binge throughout the first weeks of the Chechnya crisis.

The allegations about Yeltsin's drinking have been considerably more consistent than the president's own actions. What has shifted is the attitude of the domestic media, which has changed along with the president's political allegiances. In 1992, when, following the Tashkent debacle, an opposition deputy raised the question of the president's "heavy drinking" in Parliament, the national media formed a united front in defense of the then-democratic idol. Even the opposition newspaper *Pravda* opined, "Rumor is rumor—it can give anyone a bad name. And it should be ignored."

The liberal *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published a front-page panegyric titled "TO THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH!", complete with a list of great politicians who were fond of the hard stuff, including Winston Churchill, the Queen of England and Peter the Great.

The ideal leader of Russia should be able to down a half-bottle of vodka and still run the country. His ability to drink may even correlate with his ability to govern firmly and decisively—whatever repressed Westerners might think. Such was the attitude of the liberal press in the first year of Russia's independence.

But the last couple of years have been too hard on Russia's self-image to allow continued disregard for appearances. Observing the shrinkage of their world from under the rubble of a collapsed infrastructure, Russians have given in to a centuries-old inferiority complex. Every other newspaper piece compares Russia, unfavorably, with mythical "civilized countries." And with his behavior in Germany and Ireland, Yeltsin provided an object for a growing sense of shame—and touched off a wave of moralizing in the liberal press.

Yegor Yakovlev, editor in chief of the weekly *Obshaya Gazeta* (*The Common Newspaper*), the former head of state television and, quite possibly, the single journalist who knows Yeltsin best, wrote that a profound sense of shame compelled him to go public with what he had long known about Yeltsin's drinking problem. "Believe me, Boris Nikolayevich," he wrote, "Your weakness for alcohol is a secret from yourself only." In a front-page editorial a few weeks later, Yakovlev called on Yeltsin to resign.

Two months later, the war in Chechnya widened the breach between Yeltsin and the liberal press. In March *Novoye Vriemia* (*New Times*), the leading weekly political-analysis magazine, which had been fiercely loyal to the president, heralded the new era of pro-democracy opposition with a tortured cover featuring a close-up of an apparently sloshed president above the caption, "WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH HIM?"

The rest of the magazine was illustrated with archival photographs of Yeltsin in various stages of inebriation. More than the text itself could, those pictures confirmed the fears of millions who had staked their best hopes on Yeltsin. You are not being led by a man's man who can drink and then drive you to the future, the pictures said. The shocking, emasculating truth is: the president can't hold his liquor.

MASHA GESSEN

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hundred-dollar bills were imported into Russia for current business transactions, and a huge but unknown sum of Russian dollars was deposited in foreign banks. Morally unsavory and economically sterile though much of this activity may be, it nonetheless does represent an accumulation of capital and a honing of business skills that could someday be turned to more productive uses.

An even more important change produced by the plunge into privatization has been the transformation of its principal beneficiaries, the nomenklatura. In the days of the NEP, Lenin vainly exhorted his comrade cadres "to learn to trade," and Bukharin even told the kulaks to "get rich." Well, at long last, their heirs are doing both. Once Chernomyrdin's old ministry had been privatized as Gazprom and he emerged as a major stockholder, for example, he became an ardent convert to sound money.

The West can clearly live with this ambiguously "capitalist" New Russia, even though it had once expected a more promising pupil and partner. But can we live so easily with the New Russian politics? In particular, does the now four-month-old executive war in Chechnya portend a new internal authoritarianism in conjunction with a neo-imperialism aimed at reconstituting the Soviet Union? First, let it be recalled that since 1990, Russia has voluntarily relinquished all its gains of World War II, and Yeltsin has brought all its troops home; after 1991, he abandoned all the conquests of Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Alexander I and Alexander II combined—from the Baltic, to the Crimea, to the Caucasus, to Central Asia. It took the British more time and travail to leave India, and the French far more of both to let go of Algeria.

So radical has this retreat from empire been that it could only give rise to a nationalist reaction; and in the past two years it has spawned efforts to recover part of the losses. In Tajikistan, Russian forces intervened to support a faction of former Communists against Islamic fundamentalists, in effect re-establishing the Soviet frontier with Afghanistan. In Azerbaijan, Moscow first put former Politburo member Heydar Aliev in power against more extreme nationalists and then unsuccessfully tried to overthrow him to keep foreign oil companies out of the country. But the most notorious and bloody Russian intervention has been in Abkhazia, where Russian units armed the titular but minority ethnic group in order to detach that province from Georgia and force Georgia into an "alliance" of dependency on Russia. On the other hand, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the biggest of them all, Ukraine, have freely pursued their own policies, even in the delicate matter of the Crimea, while the once potently symbolic Black Sea Fleet is rusting its way to irrelevance at the bottom of Sevastopol Harbor.

What does this mixed record tell us of Russia's real policy around the rim of the former Soviet Union? The most probable answer is that the incidents of intervention were initially the work of a faction of the army or the former KGB, and that the result, when successful, was then endorsed by official Moscow, which indeed believes it has special security interests in the frontier zone with the Muslim world. But Russia's sporadic and ad hoc actions in this area hardly add up to a coherent policy of reconstituting the Soviet Union.

The best indication of all this is the genesis of the Chechnya war. It should first be noted that, unlike the other cases just mentioned, in international law Chechnya is an integral part of the Russian Federation, and functioning sovereign states do not let patches of territory secede at will. But, contrary to Moscow's claim, Chechnya's example in no way threatened the dissolution of the Russian Federation. In all but one of the other ethnic units of the federation the titular nationality is a minority of the population, and these entities' desire for greater autonomy and control of local resources can easily be accommodated by special treaty, as was done for Tatarstan in the spring of 1994. It should finally be noted that General Dzhokhar Dudaiev's regime is roughly what Moscow says it is: a mafia-type operation undemocratically mounted by a rogue officer. The important questions are: Why did the Russians wait three years to do anything about this real but secondary problem? And why did they so drastically overreact?

The delay is to be explained, initially, by the Supreme Soviet's refusal to support presidential action and, later, by the government's involvement elsewhere. Responding to the shock of the December 1993 elections, however, and to the growing activity, from Grozny to Moscow, of the Chechen mafia, Yeltsin's entourage decided to take "patriotic" action. Last summer, KGB chief Sergei Stepashin mounted a "rebel" movement to overthrow Dudaiev. It failed dismally.

In the meantime, the decline of Yeltsin's fortunes begun with the December 1993 elections continued. By the fall of 1994 prices were rising far faster than wages; and on "Black Tuesday," October 11, the ruble lost 27 percent of its value in a day. The promises of Western-style reform were cast into final discredit. Then, on December 5, 1994, at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe summit in Budapest, the West, in the person of the American president, told Yeltsin that NATO would expand but that Russia could not join. Yeltsin answered that this risked replacing the cold war with a "cold peace"; for in Russian eyes the Budapest rebuff signified that the arrogant West now meant to exclude Russia from Europe and civilization. And this was their reward for surrendering superpower status! "Patriotic" action at home became urgent.

The presidential Security Council therefore chose Chechnya as the ground for a "short, victorious war," to quote a tsarist minister on the War of 1905, through which Yeltsin would show his ability to defend Russian integrity and dignity. The failed Chechnya police action was turned over to Pavel Grachev's army, and the defense minister (with his own problems deriving from suspicions of corruption) rashly promised he

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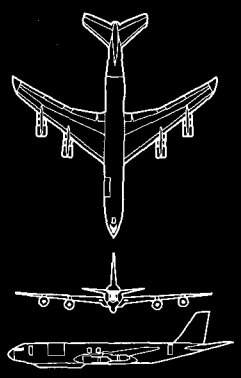

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would finish the job in a couple of weeks.

The offensive of December 11, however, turned out to resemble the Winter War of 1939 against Finland: nothing was ready, untrained recruits were thrown into action and the operation had to be expanded constantly. Moreover, the officer corps divided to the point of insubordination, and Russian mothers descended on Grozny to take their boys out of combat. But to retreat in the midst of such a disaster would have been worse, politically, than to advance. So Russia slugged on, and after four months has won the war in the Chechnya plain; the other North Caucasian autonomies have not joined the struggle as many predicted they would; and the impending guerrilla action in the mountains now appears to the Russian population like a small colonial war of the last century.

The victory, however—in addition to its hideous human costs—has caused enormous damage to the Russian political system. Yeltsin has lost almost all liberal support, without gaining that of the Communists and the majority of the nationalists. Zhirinovsky's party alone backed the war, and this has only eroded its popularity in favor of the Communists. Yeltsin's base now is largely the "power ministries"—Defense, Interior and KGB—which is why he has not fired the leaders of this incompetent crew.

Yet this base is also a political casualty of the conflict it started. The army in particular has been discredited and demoralized, at a time when most of its equipment, from tanks to aircraft, is becoming obsolete. To be sure, there is much nostalgia in the population for the days when Russia was Soviet and great; and there is genuine concern for the 25 million Russians now in the "near abroad" of the former Soviet Republics, many of whom have been pressured to emigrate back to Russia. This nostalgia fuels the rhetoric, not only of extremists, but also at times of such hitherto Westernizing leaders as Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. Nonetheless, the Chechnya disaster shows that no significant group in Russia is willing to make the sacrifices—or incur the pain—of military adventurism or of a grand foreign policy.

It is in this ambivalent context that the current tension over expanding NATO is best understood. The nub of the quarrel is political and symbolic, not military. For quite understandable historical reasons, the central European countries, especially Poland, want the security of a formal political link to Europe. For their part, the Russians, remembering NATO's original anti-Soviet purpose, bridle at the prospect of formal political exclusion from Europe and relegation to what they regard as the outer darkness of Asia.

The real political problem with Russia is not a neo-authoritarianism but the civic anomie of the population and the lack of any credible alternatives to the present governmental disorder. Polls indicate that for this December's Duma elections, voter turnout might be less than the 50 percent required by law to produce a new legislature, which would leave the present one in place. In any event, the matter is not of major significance, since decisive power lies with the executive.

But the December elections will furnish the background for the presidential elections of June 1996. In December, the rival liberal parties of Gaidar, Grigory Yavlinsky and Fedorov, even combined, have no chance at a majority, and the main victors will surely be the well-organized and disciplined Communists of Gennadi Ziuganov plus the Agrarians, with the "Liberal-Democrats" of the "clown" Zhirinovsky (as he is increasingly called) furnishing a reserve force for the Communists. The Communists are all the more powerful since they were never really delegitimized. The criminal trial of the party in 1992 (with Communist judges!) collapsed in farce, and the Parliament pardoned both the putschists of August 1991 and the insurgents of October 1993. The present victory celebration of 1945 also plays into their hands, since it says to the population that Communism made Russia great, whereas democracy has brought her low.

As for the future of the pivotal executive, none of the likely presidential candidates, including Yeltsin, presently scores over 10 percent in the polls. Yeltsin is now attempting to rebuild his shattered strength through an organization called "Stability," financed by a group of Russia's most powerful banks. Yuri Skokov, the baron of the old military-industrial complex, is a potential contender, perhaps in tandem with General Aleksandr Lebed as vice president—if the latter does not run for president himself as the Russian Pinochet.

But will Yeltsin, between illness and the bottle, last until June 1996? And even if he does, will there actually be elections? "Stability" now wants the elections to be canceled, and Aleksandr Yakovlev, the author of perestroika and now Yeltsin partisan, agrees. And these feelings reflect a clear trend in all the former Soviet republics toward a quasi-plebiscitary presidency and the eclipse of parliamentary power. This trend is dominant because it promises stability, and stability is what the country's new masters, the nomenklatura capitalists, want. If Yeltsin's clan cannot give it to them, perhaps they will seek it from Ziuganov's well-organized Communists, who, though bitter, are too savvy at age 45 and up to try to restore Communism.

For the foreseeable future, then, while Russia wobbles and oscillates, the West should react with a mixture of pressure, support and patience. We should not forget that, no matter how strident the wounded national rhetoric, the nomenklatura capitalists know that without the outside world's economic support, Russia will never get through her "transition." For the generation-long duration of that process, this fact will constitute a major restraint on her conduct. A would-be Russian authoritarianism could hardly resort to an expansionist foreign policy; nor conceivably afford to abolish glasnost, which, in the opposition to the Chechnya war, revealed how deep are the roots it has developed. Such vigorous freedom of expression, perhaps, offers the functional equivalent of checks and balances in Russia's present schizophrenic, Sovietoid-market state. •

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THE EXECUTIVE

By Fred Barnes

In the last four months, House Speaker Newt Gingrich has compared himself to a variety of Capitol Hill forebears: Nicholas Longworth, House speaker during the 1920s; Henry Clay; and the leaders of the Radical Republicans who dominated Congress after the Civil War. His press secretary, Tony Blankley, has likened him to Churchill, de Gaulle, Eisenhower, even Gandhi. ("I knew there would be snickering," Blankley says.) Beneath the hyperbole, however, is an undeniable fact: undeniable by conservatives and liberals alike. The surprise of the 104th Congress is how effective an executive Newt Gingrich has turned out to be.

This was by no means a foregone conclusion. Quite the opposite. Gingrich made his name as a tireless partisan, a clever packager of conservative themes, a shrewd campaign tactician, a political maverick. But look at what Gingrich has done as House speaker. He has held together on vote after vote the entire Republican coalition, from gay moderate Steve Gunderson of Wisconsin to gay-bashing conservative Bob Dornan of California. He has compromised when necessary—to get the balanced budget amendment and welfare reform through the House, for instance—without sacrificing principle (or much substance either). And he has held firm when possible, the tax cut being the best example. Gingrich also is a deft delegator, letting Majority Leader Dick Armey manage the House while reserving big decisions for himself and always keeping his eye on the big picture. Not bad for a bomb-thrower.

How did Gingrich accomplish so much? By meticulous time management and hard work. Two examples: with control of the House assured on election night, Gingrich held planning sessions with advisers from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m.; over Easter, with the House in a three-week recess, he devoted his time to finishing his book, aided by ghostwriter William Tucker. Gingrich has also learned to think long-term. He made two decisions in early 1994 that facilitated his ascendancy in 1995. The first was to hatch a new test for House Republicans. If they intended to be serious players in the GOP leadership, such as committee chairs, they'd better show it by raising money for Republican challengers. Those who did—activists and team players—iced their positions in the new Gingrich hierarchy. The second decision was the creation of the Contract with America. The ideas weren't new. But putting them in a package and running on it was. Republican National Chairman Haley Barbour insists that the party out of power in Washington had never before run on a detailed, positive agenda. And while others saw the contract as a set of useful campaign talking points, Gingrich envisioned it, to much ridicule, as the governing document it became. When Congress convened, "there was only one governing entity out there with a plan, House Republicans," says Barry Jackson, executive director of the House GOP Conference. The White House offered nothing. Nor did Senate Republicans. Gingrich's contract "filled the vacuum," adds Jackson. Now, senators appear on the House floor to watch votes on major issues. And Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, who won a Senate seat last year after two terms in the House, muses openly about missing out on the action. Serving in the Senate, he grouses, is like watching paint dry.

Last summer, the Gingrich camp made a half-hearted attempt to get Senate Republicans to endorse the contract. There were negotiations with Senators Phil Gramm of Texas and Trent Lott of Mississippi. The negotiations came to nothing, since many senators regarded a joint venture with House members as political slumming. But Gingrich didn't really care if senators signed on. He figured they'd be slow out of the chute in 1995 and agenda-less, while House Republicans would move swiftly. Once they acted on the contract, it would automatically be the Senate's job to tackle it. Gingrich guessed right. Gramm, then chairman of the Senate GOP campaign arm, got Senate challengers last fall to endorse seven vague principles, but these attracted little notice. "I don't remember what they were," says Blankley dismissively. However, when Gramm wanted to announce them before the contract was signed on the Capitol grounds in September, Gingrich's sidekick Armey convinced him to hold off. Following the election, Gramm declared the contract to be the Senate agenda.

The first real test of Gingrich's leadership came fast on the heels of the election. This was picking committee chairs. Gingrich alone chose, ignoring senior-

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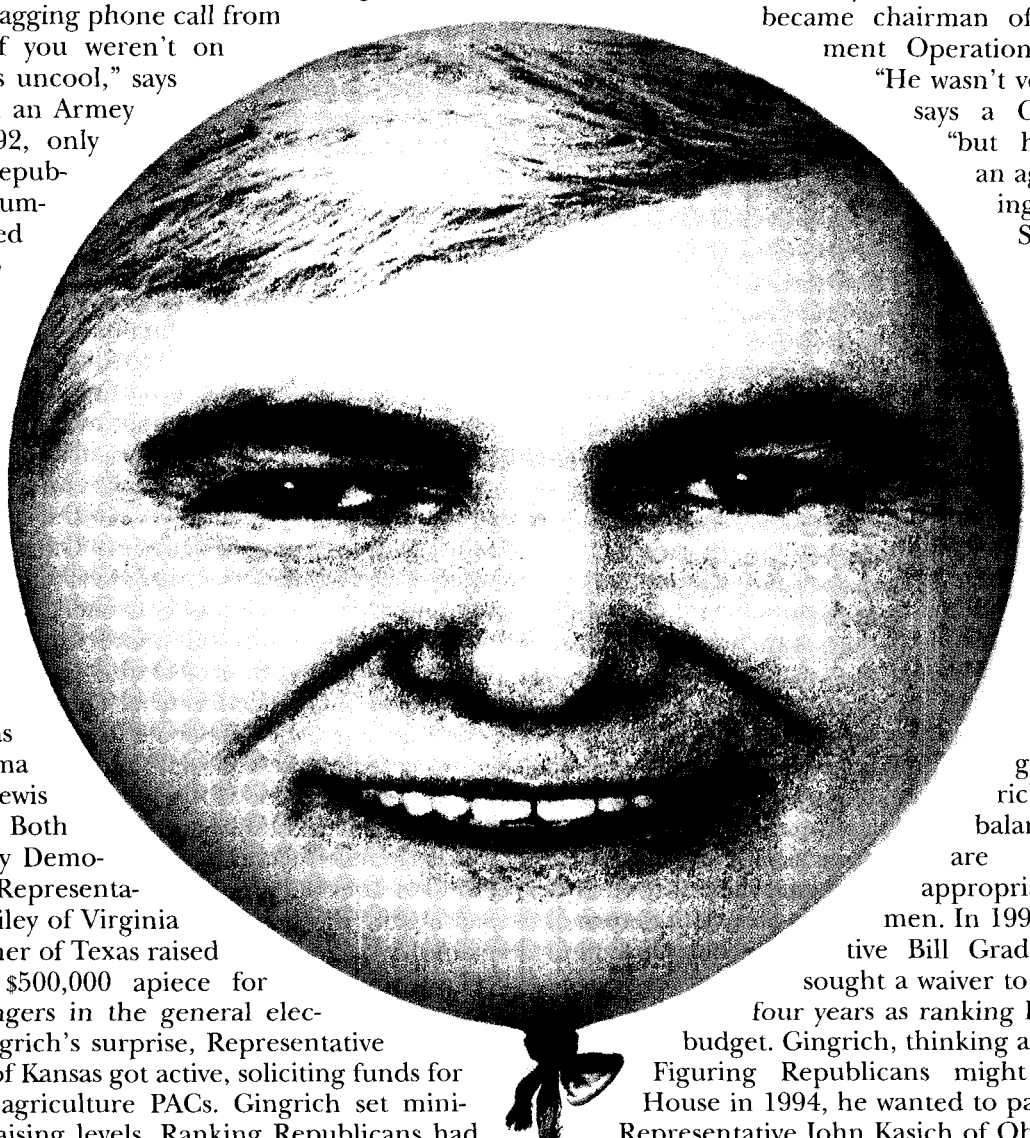
ity. His requirement that prospective leaders prove their activism had already produced results. In June, he handed out pledge cards for senior Republicans to sign. The pledges were to raise money for Republican challengers. Those who didn't return signed cards got a nagging phone call from Gingrich. "If you weren't on board, it was uncool," says Ed Gillespie, an Armey aide. In 1992, only a dozen Republican incumbents steered money to challengers. In 1994, 140 gave. In special elections early in 1994, Republican House members ponied up $60,000 each for Frank Lucas in Oklahoma and Ron Lewis in Kentucky. Both won formerly Democratic seats. Representatives Tom Bliley of Virginia and Bill Archer of Texas raised more than $500,000 apiece for GOP challengers in the general election. To Gingrich's surprise, Representative Pat Roberts of Kansas got active, soliciting funds for Lucas from agriculture PACs. Gingrich set minimum fund-raising levels. Ranking Republicans had to tithe $7,500 in 1993 and another $7,500 in 1994 to the National Republican Congressional Committee, freshmen $1,000 each year. The campaign committee is run by Representative Bill Paxon of New York, a Gingrich acolyte.

The surprising thing was how many Republicans went along with Gingrich, then House GOP whip and heir apparent to Bob Michel as leader. (The campaign for leader by Representative Gerald Solomon of New York had collapsed after four days.) Representative Carlos Moorhead of California didn't. He was the ranking Republican on two committees, but not a strong force. Gingrich moved Representative Henry Hyde of Illinois ahead of him on judiciary and Bliley on energy and commerce, both activists and ideological allies of Gingrich. Archer was safe as ways and means chairman, and Roberts earned the right to head the Agriculture Committee. Gingrich let four moderates move up to chairmanships. Why? He needs moderate votes and was eager to reward activists, even if they didn't always vote a conservative line. Representative Bill Clinger of Pennsylvania, who'd investigated Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, Tyson Foods and travelgate, became chairman of the Government Operations Committee. "He wasn't voting with us," says a Gingrich aide, "but he was being an aggressive ranking Republican." So was Solomon, a Gingrich critic, at the Rules Committee. Gingrich calculated that the benefits from making him chairman exceeded the costs.



The most sensitive posts, given Gingrich's quest for a balanced budget, are budget and appropriations chairmen. In 1993, Representative Bill Gradison of Ohio sought a waiver to serve another four years as ranking Republican on budget. Gingrich, thinking ahead, nixed it. Figuring Republicans might capture the House in 1994, he wanted to pave the way for Representative John Kasich of Ohio, a Gingrich clone, to become chairman. Some conservatives groused about Kasich, but Gingrich didn't waver. At appropriations, the ranking Republican, Representative John Myers of Indiana, was easy prey, unpopular with his GOP colleagues and no Newtoid. Gingrich felt bad about bouncing Moorhead, but relished humiliating Myers. He jumped Representative Bob Livingston of Louisiana over Myers and two others as part of a deal. Livingston abandoned his race for caucus chairman, leaving that for Representative John Boehner of Ohio and taking the appropriations chairmanship. This was win-win for Gingrich: a protégé as caucus chief, a zealous budget-cutter at appropriations. More important, there was scarcely a peep of protest over Gingrich's appointments. His dominance as speaker was established. And "he had committee chairmen ready to fulfill the revolution," argues

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Gingrich pollster Frank Luntz. In the Senate, Majority Leader Bob Dole didn't. Gingrich sneered at the Senate recently in a speech to the House GOP Conference. "They're chairmen by accident over there," he said, referring to seniority. The conference erupted in applause.

To bolster Republican strength, Gingrich deputized a special posse of lobbyists. He and other Republicans had marveled for years at the ability of Democrats to draw support for their entire agenda from narrow constituency groups. "They'd get the AFL-CIO to back gay rights," says a GOP strategist. Gingrich recruited a dozen groups to back the full contract in exchange for special access. So every Thursday morning, Boehner presides over a meeting with officials of the National Federation of Independent Business, the Christian Coalition, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Restaurant Association, Americans for Tax Reform, the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Homebuilders, among others. Lobbying assignments are handed out. "All are muscle groups which can instantly mobilize members," says a Republican official. The private lobbyists were notably successful in pressuring Democrats to vote for GOP bills.

But strategy and organization aren't everything. Gingrich had to prove himself in legislative battle. Though he says he has profited from studying combat generals, Gingrich has styled his speakership after Democrat Sam Rayburn, who was speaker between 1940 and 1961. He has taken over the Board of Education Room in the Capitol where Rayburn conferred daily with advisers. Gingrich has his own set of informal advisers, including several GOP freshmen. He uses the same party ratios for committee membership as Rayburn did. And though his authority is unchallenged, he gives others in the leadership a long leash, again like Rayburn. He saves himself for the big moments.

Gingrich let Armey choreograph the first day, when Republicans needed to demonstrate, with the national media watching, that they could run the House crisply. (In fact, Armey plotted out the entire ninety-three days of the contract.) Armey held two practice sessions on the House floor. Gingrich pal Bob Walker of Pennsylvania emulated Democratic Representative Barney Frank of Massachusetts, peppering GOP members with parliamentary inquiries and requests for unanimous consent. Republicans also practiced voting "yes" for tabling motions after voting "no" on them for forty years. The actual day—Republicans call it "the longest day"—went according to the minute-by-minute script. Reforms of Congress passed overwhelmingly and Gingrich's own speech got high marks.

The Gingrich method is to allow others to handle everything until there's an impediment. Then he intervenes, not by arm-twisting but by inviting recalcitrants to his office and, as Paxon puts it, "taking them to the vision level." On the day of the House vote on the balanced budget amendment, twenty Republican freshmen came to see Gingrich, claiming they wouldn't back an amendment that didn't require a three-fifths majority to raise taxes. It took Gingrich ten minutes to turn them around. His message was simple. We're winning the war. We've made promises. If we keep them, we win politically and the country comes out ahead. Don't jeopardize everything. Off the cuff, Gingrich threw them a bone, promising a separate vote on a three-fifths amendment on April 15, 1996. When the freshmen left, Gingrich was confident enough not to take a head count. All but two voted his way.

Gingrich gave the same treatment to leaders of the National Rifle Association, who told him in January they wanted a quick vote on lifting the assault weapons ban. "Let's step back," Gingrich said. He spelled out the vision of a new majority of which the NRA was an honored constituent. He contended that Republicans needed to build credibility before taking up their issue. They relented. But Gingrich's talk of the "grand scheme" doesn't always work. During March and into April, he failed to satisfy scores of House Republicans who wanted the tax cut scaled back. He delayed a vote for a week in hopes the conflict would resolve itself. It didn't, forcing Gingrich to decide. On this one, he measured intensity. Backers of the full tax cut, especially pro-family groups, were more passionate than critics. The tax bill passed easily, losing only nine of 230 GOP votes.

Gingrich's decisions will soon get tougher, and he won't be able to rely on gentle persuasion. To hold Republicans in line on sensitive spending cuts—in Medicare, for example—he'll have to twist arms. He spent three days in early May in Leesburg, Virginia, rousing Republicans to attack the budget. Gingrich is anxious, but not terribly. He seems to believe that Medicare can somehow be depoliticized, Social Security left untouched and the budget balanced in seven years. Or that he has the political skill and dominance to square these circles. And given the political dexterity he displayed in the first 100 days, the burden of doubt probably lies with his critics.

One thing Gingrich doesn't fear is the White House. And this, perhaps, is the ultimate trademark of Gingrich, the hyper-organized executive. In fact, he and Republican members of Congress largely ignore the administration. Barry Jackson, the influential GOP staffer, has never met the chief White House lobbyist, Patrick Griffin, and doesn't care to. In February, the administration sent five officials—Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Defense Secretary William Perry, U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—to brief House Republicans before a defense vote. Only one Republican showed up (Gingrich hadn't instructed them to). "It was kind of embarrassing," says a Gingrich aide sheepishly. Gingrich himself was scheduled to introduce the officials at the briefing. He never showed up either. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Ahead to the Past

Will Sandra Bullock bring back the 1940s? Possibly even the 1930s? To see **While You Were Sleeping** (Hollywood) is like traveling back to the films of Deanna Durbin (when she wasn't singing) and June Allyson—or even a bit further back to Madge Evans and Florence Rice. Most of their films seemed to derive from *Collier's Magazine* stories that had one interchangeable heroine whose nose wrinkled when she laughed and who had a boyfriend named Tim.

Bullock, of course, is up-to-date. She, we feel, keeps no lavender sachet in her underwear drawer and knows the truth about the stork. But, in this screenplay by Daniel G. Sullivan and Fredric Lebow, her character is a liberated 1990s version of the sassy, sprightly, not-too-glandular heroine of those past decades whose whole being peaked in courtship and a wedding.

Bernard Shaw said somewhere that *As You Like It* is the fifteen happiest minutes in a young woman's life spun out to three hours. This film runs only half that time, but it's the same general principle. Bullock works in a change booth on the Chicago el, and she is smitten with a handsome young man, Peter Gallagher, who passes through every day and completely ignores her. One Christmas Eve someone pushes him off the platform onto the tracks; he is knocked unconscious. Bullock rushes from her booth and rolls him to safety. He is still unconscious, so she accompanies him to the hospital where she is assumed to be his fiancée.

Gallagher remains in a coma for a few weeks, during which time Bullock is warmly welcomed by his family, who hadn't known their son was engaged. However, Gallagher has an attractive brother, Bill Pullman.... (A*ha*.) It's one of those plots that depends on a person's being interrupted every time she is about to tell the truth but where we make allowances so that the soufflé won't collapse.

The chief reason that we feel generous toward the film is Bullock herself. She tickles. All the others are good, especially Pullman and Gallagher, but she's the one we want to spend time with. The first time I saw her, in *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway*, she was noticeable, not much more. Then in *Speed*, stuck in that careering bus with Keanu Reeves, she managed to give a slam-bang action picture some curlicues of comedy and sex. Now, at last, she has her part: funny, self-assured, self-doubting, touching and touched. As a performer, she has a repertoire of devices—inflections, glances, astonishments, delights—that she has completely ingested. They are not mere tricks; she thinks, and within her narrow range, she acts. Whether she will stay within that range, whether she could succeed outside it, who knows? But seeing her performance in this film is an assurance that perennial characters can blossom—with a bit of modernizing and talent.

Meg Ryan, Bullock's predecessor in the funny-winsome vein, *has* tried to widen her range. She played an alcoholic wife in *When a Man Loves a Woman* with no particular distinction and to no particular avail. She is back on track in **French Kiss** (20th Century-Fox), but this time the track leads to troubles.

First, there's the screenplay. As witness Bullock's film, romantic comedy needs a certain amount of leeway from the audience, but this picture never stops begging for forgiveness. Juncture after juncture in the plot, character after character—including Ryan's—is patent artifice. Second, this time Ryan is playing opposite Kevin Kline. She has played in comedies with Tim Robbins and Tom Hanks, no slouches, and has come off pretty well. But Kline is a different dash of dazzle.

Robbins and Hanks are highly competent actors with copyrighted, trademark-registered personalities. Kline has no personality—in that sense. He has to make a person every time he acts; and he is a dynamite comic actor. When he attacks a part, that verb says it all. His energy is high, his intelligence is sparking, his imagination is furious. He is *ready*. He hits a part like a laser beam cutting it to the right shape. And here, to some degree, he overwhelms Ryan.

This is not to say that Kline is a selfish actor; part of his design is interplay, darting and reciprocal. But it is to say that a pleasing and pleasant woman like Ryan, coming aboard with her now familiar charms, is dealing with an actor who is starting from scratch and goes from zero to sixty in about four seconds. Last time out, in *Princess Caraboo*, he was a Greek butler in a stately English household in 1817, and he had me smiling the whole

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Circle of Friends. *A rarity—a picture made to be charming that actually charms. Youthful romance, troubles and triumphs, in an Irish village. (Reviewed 4/10/95)* **Dolores Claiborne.** *Kathy Bates, suspected twice of murder, gives this Stephen King thriller outsize verity. Taylor Hackford directs well-blended time-strands and captures the tang of the Maine coast. (4/17/95)* **Mina Tannenbaum.** *Two Jewish girls grow up as friends in postwar Paris, with many discoveries along the way about each other and themselves. Much delicacy and wit, considerable rue. (3/27/95)* **Priest.** *Two priests break priestly vows in Liverpool. It's certainly sensational, certainly humane; in either case, it's quite skillfully done. (5/15/95)*—**SK**

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time. This time he's a French jewel thief whose ambition is to own a vineyard and make fine wine, and this time I was chuckling.

The screenplay by Adam Brooks seems to have been written as they shot the film. Ryan is an American teacher in Canada hoping for Canadian citizenship in order to marry Tim Hutton, a doctor. He goes to Paris for a medical conference and falls for a French woman. Ryan, who hates flying, takes a plane to Paris to reclaim him. Next to her sits Kline, in leather jacket, unshaven, and he amiably calms her nerves. They talk. Before they land in Paris he secretly slips a diamond necklace into her bag in order to get it past customs. Of course her bag is then stolen by another crook or there would be no film.

Ryan, like most people in such plots, behaves fluently in ways for which her life has not prepared her. Kline's character is a patchwork of whatever the plot needs from him at the moment. Ryan's familiar maneuverings of face and voice help. (Getting a wee bit too familiar? Does this danger lie ahead for Bullock?) But it's Kline's voltage that gives the film whatever charge it has.

The directing is a surprise. Lawrence Kasdan, molder of such mighty serious works as *Grand Canyon* and *Wyatt Earp*, is not particularly noted for dexterity. Here, directing someone else's script, he is agile. Maybe there's a Fountain of Middle-Age.

Another somewhat different look at the past.

A friend urged me, not long ago, to catch David Caruso on the TV series "NYPD Blue." I caught; and what I caught was a typical TV face, rubbery and undistinguished, belonging to an actor who could underplay with the worst of them. He had red hair.

Still has it. But in his first major film role, he switches from law to outlaw. The past serves him up a remake of a 1948 thriller, **Kiss of Death** (20th Century-Fox)—less a remake than a revision, by Richard Price. Not much more is left of the original than the police's grip on an ex-con. Even if he wants to go straight, they can force him to work for them in various ways.

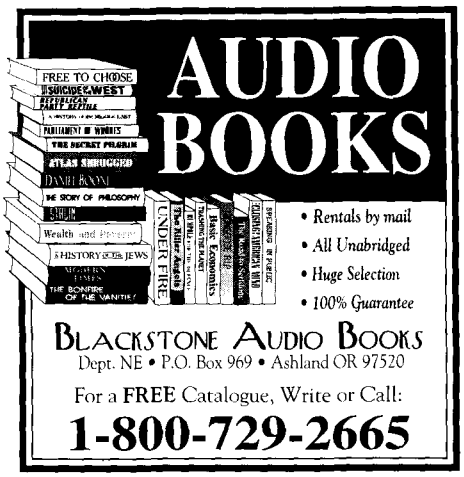
The director was Barbet Schroeder, that wandering minstrel of film, sometimes tasteful and ambitious, sometimes not. (He made the slasher pic *Single White Female*, and he also made the Claus von Bülow film, *Reversal of Fortune*.) Here Schroeder turns out a middle-of-the-road cops-and-robbers flick with not one original sequence or shot. The heavy is literally one: Nicolas Cage, who must have spent months at a gym to make himself Mr. Beef but who is still a lightweight whiny actor. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

On a Cold Planet

A remarkable dramatic work has just ended a brief run at the Cucaracha Theatre in New York. **Roberto Zucco** is the last play of Bernard-Marie Koltès, published in 1989 and produced posthumously after the author died of AIDS at the age of 41. His premature death represents another grievous loss to postmodern drama. Although Koltès was a Frenchman, *Roberto Zucco* is composed (as Richard Eoin Nash-Siedlecki correctly notes in a recent article in *American Theater*) in a style that approximates the spirit of German theater. It clearly belongs to that idiosyncratic neo-Romantic tradition that erupted in the early nineteenth century with Buechner's *Woyzeck*, re-emerged a century later in Wedekind's *Lulu* series, flowered in early Brecht plays, expressed itself in the drawings of George Grosz and the paintings of Max Ernst (not to mention such movies as Fritz Lang's *M the Murderer* and Josef von Sternberg's *Blue Angel*) and then reached its postwar culmination in the mordant minimalistic naturalism of Franz Xavier Kroetz.

Like all those feverish works, *Roberto Zucco* constitutes a rebuke to the heroic idealism of the early Romantics. It is riddled with the same sadomasochistic dread, permeated with the same elliptical style, that we associate with the drama of existential revolt. And it is similarly designed to disorder the senses by merging the real and the hallucinatory, thereby making the familiar strange. Just as many of Brecht's works are located in a highly subjective geography (the hero of *In the Jungle of Cities* sets out for Tahiti by sailing across Lake Michigan), so *Roberto Zucco* undermines our confidence in a seated sense of place.



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One scene is set in the Paris Metro, another in a French police station, but the whorehouse district is a shadowy underworld neighborhood known as "Little Chicago."

That mysterious locus of deception, betrayal and aberrant eroticism is vaguely reminiscent of Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*, and there is no question that American movies represent another strong influence on Koltès. Nash-Siedlecki tells us that plastered on the walls of Koltès's studio were posters of James Dean and the young Marlon Brando, those simmering inarticulate archetypes of '50s angst. Roberto Zucco differs from them in being a serial killer, but he displays the same free-floating rebelliousness, the same irresistible appeal to women and men, the same capacity to initiate fashions in dress and behavior. With his Spanish name and his propensity for casual violence, Zucco has the credentials of an outsider and an outlaw—in fact, everything necessary to achieve the obscure glory of the criminal-saint. Add to Koltès's German and American influences one French one—the thief and martyr Jean Genet, whose degenerate glamour glows fitfully through this dark work.

Travis Preston's meticulously controlled production is set in a large warehouse whose back wall features photos of Zucco's face and private parts. The photographs are significant because, we are told, the police could not make a composite picture of the character on whom Koltès based Zucco (a killer named Succo): every shot of him was different. Just as he eludes capture, so Zucco eludes definition. He exists only in his impact on other people; in himself, he is nothing. The very beginning of the play shows him escaping from prison while two guards watch in wonder—a wonder we share since the character is walking along a vertical wall on a perpendicular journey. Zucco has spent time in jail for tossing his father out of a window. He returns home to kill his mother as well, holding her in a deadly embrace that exerts just a little more pressure than a filial hug.

Before the play is over, Zucco has also murdered a melancholy police inspector, an old pensioner on the Metro and an innocent boy. Yet, he never loses his capacity to attract sympathy and even love from other characters, even some of those he kills. A young girl who has been physically abused by her brother is totally fascinated by him. In a telegraphic exchange, he claims to be "a secret agent," which somehow is an apt description. She asks his name. "I'll die if I tell you." "I don't care," she replies. When Zucco discloses himself, she surrenders herself: "I'm yours—you've taken my innocence." Two pairs of boots remain on stage to symbolize their union.

Having lost her virginity, the girl is sold into sexual slavery by her irate and brutal brother, joining a brothel in Little Chicago run by a tattooed madam. It is not long before she betrays Zucco by revealing his name. By this time, Zucco is contemplating his own death. He wants to be a street dog in his next life. "Words don't work any more," he says, "We have to stop teaching words.... Sooner or later, everybody dies. That's what makes the birds sing."

Zucco takes a woman hostage, kills her teenage son and appropriates her Mercedes. Yet this woman also falls in love with him: "You're like a switchblade. As soon as you finish, you close up and go away." (Buechner's Woyzeck also "runs through the world like an open razor blade.") Following a final reunion with the girl, Zucco is apprehended. And once again he escapes from prison—this time, in the striking imagery of director Preston and designers Christopher Barreca and Zhanna Gurvich, climbing up a huge illuminated train station clock like a demented Harold Lloyd. By this time, Zucco has entered legend—a Samson brought low by women, an emblematic image of patricide and matricide in a world where "every child kills his parents."

The production features some Robert-Wilsonesque choreography and a sound score (by David Van Tieghem) that adds a mesmerizing and sometimes shocking undercurrent to the events. Among the actors, Kirk Acevedo brings a dark catatonic solitariness to Zucco, and the Romanian actress Elina Lowensohn, decked out in striped red stockings, has appealing ferocity as the girl. They are ably supported by Rebecca Nelson, Marylouise Burke, Alison White and John Gould Rubin, among others.

The power of the play is obviously not to be found in depth of character or breadth of action. It is in its style and atmosphere, in the Artaudian cruelty and carnage it embodies, and also in the way it depicts ruthlessness and murder without psychology or moralizing. Except for this lack of commentary, Koltès mirrors our modern obsession with cold-blooded killers, those mesmerizing anti-heroes who currently dominate our movies, our literature, our media, our dreams. Every day a new figure takes his place in the nomenclature of bloody assassins alongside the murderers depicted in *In Cold Blood*, *The Executioner's Song* and *The Silence of the Lambs*. *Roberto Zucco* chronicles the spiritual life of the serial killer, and the breakdown of the social order that creates him. It also suggests those feelings of ostracism and isolation that we secretly share with him as our planet grows progressively colder and colder.

In his new play, **Night and Her Stars**, Richard Greenberg has found a good dramatic subject. Too bad the movies found it first. The agony of Charles Van Doren over his participation in the game show "21" has already been well-documented in Robert Redford's film *Quiz Show*, so the necessity for Greenberg's play eludes me. I remember a time not long ago when Hollywood borrowed material from Broadway. Now the theater is beginning to look to movies not only for musicals such as *Sunset Boulevard* and *Beauty and the Beast*, but also for serious plays such as *On the Waterfront*.

I'm told that the writing of *Night and Her Stars* predated the making of *Quiz Show*, but it still seems like déjà vu all over again. We are walked one more time through the sleazy tactics with which Dan Enright scammed a gullible public, coaching contestants like Herb Stempel and then, under ratings pressure from his sponsors, replacing him with a more appealing Columbia English professor from a distinguished literary family. One more time, we watch this attractive young man being ensnared by the lures of success, celebrity and, it is implied, the need to impress his father. Once more, we watch Stempel taking a fall on a question he actually knew and, enraged by Enright's broken promises, telling his story to the press—resulting in congressional investigations and the embarrassing exposure of an American media hero.

It is a compelling story, and it was compellingly told in Paul Attanasio's screenplay. Greenberg spares us the self-glorifying part claimed by Richard Goodwin in the film, but otherwise provides nothing unfamiliar, aside from one fresh scene at the end. Following his confession and disgrace, Charlie joins his father, Mark, in his country home and they talk about trees. Charlie starts to memorize their names, as if compiling answers to questions. Mark teaches him just to identify the trees. That moment, which dramatizes the difference between empty displays of encyclopedic facts and the compelling reality of nature, could have been the basis for a much better play—one that might have focused not on the victim of moral corruption but rather on the objective circumstances that tempted him. After all, it was the television audience that insisted on this facile display of cultural literacy. Enright knew this kind of stuff was only show business, and in the world of P.T. Barnum, you never give a sucker an even break.

As for the Manhattan Theatre Club production at the American Place Theatre, it has an attractive Van Doren

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impersonator in John Slattery. Along with Patrick Breen, who is very strong as Stempel, Slattery carries the only truth in the otherwise frenetic proceedings. David Warren has directed the show like a musical, with everybody (except Van Doren) facing front and lobbing laugh lines. Peter Frechette, a gifted actor who doesn't seem happy in the role of Enright, suffers the most from this, chewing his dialogue like Eric Roberts, and fixing the others with a baleful scowl.

Can we call a moratorium on the quiz show scandals? Shakespeare's Cleopatra committed suicide rather than be "extemporally" staged by "the quick comedians." But Charles Van Doren has to repeat his suffering with every retelling of his misfortune. Americans love to shred and deface the idols they create, but Van Doren's sin was venial, not mortal. And he deluded himself into believing that he was giving some cultural status to a process rarely celebrated in this country—the work of the intellect. We shared the same floor as young professors of English at Columbia, and he never seemed happy to me. When I once congratulated him on his fame, he gave me a wan look, as if to say, This is nothing. Now, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, he is doomed to walk the earth until the shame is filmed or staged away. Can't we let his disgraced spirit rest? •

Liberal Ghosts

BY JAMES Q. WILSON

The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War by Alan Brinkley

(Knopf, 371 pp., $27.50)

American liberalism, like America in general, is different. Created by the New Deal but drawing on features of the earlier Progressive movement, liberalism here, unlike the liberalism found in many European nations, never took seriously the idea of nationalizing major industries, only occasionally and then without much conviction proposed any major redistribution of income, and merely flirted with centralized economic planning. A welfare state was created, but compared to the welfare state in many other industrialized nations, the American version offered less generous benefits to the unemployed, provided no children's allowances and restricted tax-supported medical care to veterans, the elderly and the very poor.

Government in Washington grew to be large, expensive and intrusive, but the defenders of its growth rarely felt that it produced "real" liberalism. Much of its cost reflected the large sums raised to finance Social Security and national defense, and most of its intrusiveness took the form of judicial and administrative regulation of the private sector. Neither the cost nor the regulation, in the eyes of many liberals, furthered the central cause of liberalism, namely, greater economic equality. To be sure, the regulatory state did redistribute power in ways that often helped economically weak minorities or unorganized majorities assert claims against corporations and other institutions, but these claims—for individual opportunity, group privilege, consumer protection, environmental defense, commercial compensation or legal advantage—were defended more in terms of rights rather than in terms of equality.

As we approach the end of a century-long experimentation with the use of governmental power to produce social change, we are discovering that American liberalism has become a stool standing on three legs: the protection of rights, the maintenance of a safety net and the stimulation of economic growth through government spending. Since these three strategies need not (and usually do not) lead to greater economic equality, many liberals are dissatisfied with what has been done in their name. We can harass one another with lawsuits and regulations without becoming any more equal; we can take comfort in the existence of a safety net and still find vast disparities in income and wealth among the great majority who live above that floor; we can welcome government stimulation of consumer demand but worry that this stimulation has perverse distributional effects.

And because each of these strategies can (and often does) produce burdens and inefficiencies, each is highly vulnerable to conservative attack. The protection of rights through law suits and regulatory proceedings imposes immense costs on ordinary transactions and elevates rights over responsibilities and individuals over communities. The existence of a safety net produces personal dependency and erodes savings, initiative and accountability; any means-tested program provides a strong incentive for people living near the cutoff point either to substitute welfare for work or to detest those who do. Government management of aggregate demand is slow, clumsy and often ineffective; moreover the political bias in favor of tax cuts and against spending cuts means that the political economy of liberalism will be biased in favor of inflation.

At the end of liberalism's century, then, many liberals are not happy with what they have produced and many conservatives are eager to dismantle it. How did this happen? What historical, political and cultural factors shaped the distinctive features of American liberalism? Alan Brinkley offers an answer.

One would think that a catastrophe as vast as the Great Depression would have given the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt ample opportunity to create a liberal state far more powerful than what in fact emerged. In beginning his explanation of why that did not happen, Brinkley draws on *The New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly*, the splendid book by Ellis Hawley that sets forth the debates among early New Dealers over what direction to take. Hawley described three alternative proposals for rescuing the nation from the apparent failures of big business: vigorously enforcing the anti-trust laws; suspending those laws and encouraging instead business-government cooperation; and creating devices for centralized economic planning. The trust-busters found their champion in Thurman Arnold and their support in the legacy of Louis Brandeis; the associationalists had their brief and ill-starred moment of fame with the National Recovery Administration and its Blue Eagle symbol; the planners were led by Rexford Guy Tugwell, Adolph Berle and Gardiner Means and had important allies in Henry Wallace's Department of Agriculture.

Roosevelt, naturally, almost never gave a clear signal to any of these factions. The early New Deal emphasized direct relief and hasty improvisation, all quickly endorsed by Congress. The NRA failed to be replaced by the view—defended, though without either skill or success by Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau—that restoring business confidence was essential to any lasting recovery. If associ-

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ations and codes supported by business, labor and government could not do this formally, then the president ought to do it by rhetoric (replace anti-business with pro-business speeches) and deregulation. Antitrust prosecutions were led (implausibly) by Arnold, despite his having published *The Folklore of Capitalism*, a book critical of antitrust law. Though he reinvigorated what had often been a moribund part of the Justice Department, by the end of the 1930s it seemed clear that breaking up monopolies was not enhancing economic growth; indeed, to the associationalists, it was just another blow to business confidence.

The planners tried to build a program around the National Resources Planning Board (NRPB) and its predecessors. (The NRPB was not created until 1939, but it grew out of the National Planning Board formed in 1933 by Interior Secretary Harold Ickes.) "Planning" meant different things to different people, but to its intellectual leaders it meant, among other things, "rationalizing" the market so as to remove its "uncertainty." Just how this was to be accomplished was not entirely clear. By the early years of World War II, in any event, the leading NRPB documents were urging policies that fell far short of any direct planning of investment or production. In *Security, Work, and Relief Policies*, published in 1943, the NRPB called for something very much like what we now know as American liberalism: an expanded program of social insurance, more generous public assistance, a Keynesian fiscal policy and an extensive federal jobs program. The goal was a full-employment economy and a safety net.

As Brinkley describes it, liberalism was transformed by the New Deal from a Progressive preoccupation with economic reform to a postwar interest in rights, from an early discussion of planning production to a later commitment to encouraging consumption, from an attack on "economic royalists" to the recruitment of business executives. Some obvious historical factors help to account for this change. The depression of 1937, coming right on the heels of the great Democratic victories in the 1936 elections, disoriented the New Dealers. The Roosevelt Recession, as it came to be called, was of a magnitude that rivaled the Depression of 1929-1932: in just a few months, industrial production fell by 40 percent and corporate profits by 78 percent; unemployment increased by 4 million; stock prices dropped by 48 percent. The lesson was clear: the New Deal had not ended the Depression. Many business leaders felt it had perpetuated it.

Roosevelt had no idea what to do next. One of the few things he had tried to do, his effort to pack the Supreme Court, had backfired badly. The Court had declared many New Deal measures to be unconstitutional. One can sympathize, perhaps, with Roosevelt's frustration; one might even support his effort to get Congress to enlarge the Court; but nobody could forgive what Brinkley calls, accurately, his "deliberately deceptive" defense of the plan. Roosevelt said that he wanted only to improve the "efficiency" of the Court. This was not only nonsense, it was politically disastrous nonsense, for it led even critics of the Court to attack the president's disingenuous assault on a constitutional body that existed to safeguard rights.

By 1942, of course, all these issues were swept aside by the war and its extraordinary success in ending unemployment and stagnation. It accomplished these miracles despite inept government efforts to plan wartime production, efforts that became the object of growing criticism as one mobilization czar succeeded another in a futile effort to manage production. Brinkley does not attempt to explain the reason why the war effort ended a depression that the New Deal not only could not cure, but by 1937 had duplicated. The answer, I suspect, is the restoration of business confidence. Capital had remained idle or was sent abroad so long as President Roosevelt was bent on attacking "economic royalists"; Marriner Eccles, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, was endorsing deficit spending; and the Temporary National Economic Committee was investigating the ownership structure of American industry. The war brought a commitment to production and an endorsement of industry as the arsenal of democracy. Confidence was restored, business boomed.

Moreover, the war brought Americans face to face with European totalitarianism, leading even some dedicated liberals to reconsider their commitment to statism. And if anyone missed the possible connection between statist strategies and the destruction of personal freedom, James Burnham made it explicit in his widely read book, *The Managerial Revolution*, which appeared in 1941. The warnings of Burnham, a former socialist and Trotskyite, could not be dismissed by liberals as easily as were those of another best-selling author, Friedrich Hayek, whose *The Road to Serfdom* appeared in 1944. Liberals attacked Hayek but his book sold even more copies than Burnham's and became a manifesto for economic conservatism in the postwar world.

But these explanations, important as they are, cannot be the whole story. Liberals in other democratic nations struggled with depressions and the war without abandoning—in fact, while strengthening—their commitment to central planning and income equalization. Great Britain entered the postwar era under the control of a Labor Party that nationalized much of British industry, including the health care system. When Germany began its postwar reconstruction, it did so by linking free-market economics with labor participation in industrial management and a vastly more elaborate and expensive welfare state than anything contemplated here. Sweden, though not a combatant, paid no attention to Burnham or Hayek; it combined private ownership of property with very high taxes and substantial income redistribution. Almost everywhere in Europe and Japan one finds economic planning, government-business partnerships and cradle-to-grave public assistance. But not here.

Brinkley's explanation of this aspect of American exceptionalism rests precisely on those aspects of political culture that have always been central to our public life. Americans retained throughout the 1930s their deep suspicion of institutional power. "For all the efforts of New Dealers to celebrate and legitimize the new functions they were creating for the state," he writes, "a broad suspicion of centralized bureaucratic power—rooted in traditions of republicanism and populism stretching back to the earliest years of the American polity—remained a staple of popular discourse and constant impediment to liberal aims." Even when people were praising Roosevelt for sending them federal money and government jobs, they were attacking him for trying to pack the Court and for regulating their lives. The farmers cashed their agricultural assistance checks, but began increasingly to vote Republican.

Income redistribution has never caught the fancy of Americans. Sidney Verba and his colleagues showed, in their important book, *Elites and the Idea of Equality*, that even the most liberal Americans are tolerant of income differences that would appall a conservative Swede. When American feminists, intellectuals and Democratic Party leaders are asked to define a fair ratio between the earnings of a top executive and a skilled worker in an auto company, on average they endorse a ratio of roughly six to one. Similar respondents in Sweden support a ratio closer to two to one. And when the comparison is between executives and elevator operators, the preferred ratio for

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American liberals is about ten to one, while for their Swedish counterparts it is about three to one. Democratic Party leaders in this country support as fair an income ratio that is more than twice as great as the income ratio thought fair by Swedish conservatives and business leaders.

Linked to this American support for individualism in economic matters was the indifference or hostility of American labor leaders to an activist government. It is now well-known, of course, that the AFL opposed, among other New Deal ideas, a plan to regulate wages and hours, and it was at best lukewarm about the Social Security Act. As the war approached, Walter Reuther of the United Auto Workers and Philip Murray of the CIO proposed the creation of "industrial councils," composed of labor, business and government leaders, that would supervise industrial mobilization and production. But when war broke out and Americans eagerly rushed off to build tanks and airplanes, the industrial-council idea, never popular with business, was dropped. Instead, labor made a no-strike pledge in exchange for a government promise to have union shops in all the factories. Union membership soared, but unions played no role in managing industry.

Brinkley's assessment, as opposed to his description, of the emergence of postwar American liberalism—the emphasis on rights and employment, the de-emphasis on equality and planning—is only hinted at in this book, but the hints are revealing. In his view, American liberals "began a broad retreat from many of the commitments that had once defined their politics: concerns about the problem of production and about the limitations of the market." After the end of the great postwar economic expansion, he asserts, the nation fell victim to "an erratic and stagnant economy, increasing inequality and growing social instability," developments that proved that "it was not as easy as liberals once expected to create a just and prosperous society without worrying about the problems of production and the structure of the economy."

What can he mean by all this? Historians are often inclined to combine their skills at archival research and narrative development with a tendency to state their conclusions as passing profundities and end the story there. Since we all like to read a well-told tale, we are often inclined to forgive the silliness with which it sometimes ends. Imagine an economist asserting that the last forty or so years were characterized by economic stagnation and growing inequality. He or she would be ripped to shreds by professional colleagues who would ask for some modicum of evidence, some reconciliation of the facts (the great booms of the 1960s and the mid-1980s) with the theory. Incomes are distributed unequally here as in every society; but economic growth between the end of the Second World War and the mid-1970s greatly reduced that inequality as more and more people joined the ranks of the middle class. The increased inequality that has occurred since the 1970s has been modest by comparison, and the reason for it is not well understood.

To be sure, the economy has changed character; and every time it does, somebody says that the change is a problem that government must address. Once it was automation, then it was the rise of service jobs, now it is the advent of the Information Age. Each time somebody says that the change constitutes a worrisome "problem of production" and urges a new program to solve it (ban machinery, retrain workers, fund federal jobs, give every child a laptop computer and on and on). Each time it turns out that there is not a "problem of production," there is a promise of technology and opportunity.

If Brinkley or others wish to perform a mental experiment, let them ask not how our present situation reflects past failures, but what our present situation would be if we had adopted policies to change the structure of the economy. There were two alternatives available in the 1930s: to plan production and investment (hinted at by the early enthusiasts for the NRPB) and to create joint labor-management committees to run industry (suggested by Murray and Reuther and earlier by Herbert Hoover and the architects of the NRA). The planners felt that free competition was disappearing, owing to the rise of big business and the separation of ownership from control; prices were being "administered" by industrial technocrats, not set by impersonal market forces. (The idea has survived in the writings of John Kenneth Galbraith.) Let us substitute publicly accountable (because politically selected) bureaucrats for the corporate ones. What might have resulted, if all had worked out for the best, would be Japan today.

Charles Wolf Jr. has shown where planning by the best and the brightest in Japan, in MITI and the Ministry of Finance, has brought that country. Its gross domestic product is in its fifth year of stagnation (the GDP of the United States is growing); industrial production at the end of 1994 was 5 percent lower than it had been in 1990 (in the United States it was 15 percent higher); productivity during the least eight years has not grown at all in Japan (in the United States it has grown about 1 percent a year). In most areas of critical technology, the United States, not long ago described by a presidential candidate as a country reduced to flipping hamburgers, leads Japan.

Or perhaps we could have invested more heavily in income maintenance programs and worker-management councils designed to make employment more permanent and unemployment less burdensome. No doubt some workers would have benefited, but the benefits would have to be set against the costs. The magnitude of those costs is apparent in Germany, where per-unit labor expenses are now so high that German products (like Swedish ones) cannot compete on the world market. It can be argued that Germany and Sweden are more just societies than the United States, but it cannot be argued that they are more prosperous. Measured in purchasing power parity, the per capita GDP has been higher in the United States than in Sweden or West Germany, at least since 1970, and this despite the United States having a much more heterogeneous population. The tradeoff between justice and prosperity, an issue stated with singular clarity by Adam Smith (and resolved by him in favor of prosperity), is not an easy one to manage. Perhaps there can be no permanent resolution. But under current historical realities, one thing is certain: rhetorical support for a liberalism that embraces "a just and prosperous society," without any indication of how that is to be done, is mere arm-waving.

In a recent essay in *The American Prospect*, Brinkley sets out to defend more systematically what he has in mind. After reviewing the argument of his book, he turns to the present. He notes, correctly, that the American people remain as suspicious as ever of federal power (even as they enjoy federal largesse) and are in addition increasingly worried about an emphasis on rights, especially group rights, that seems to threaten the possibility of community. To this list of problems Brinkley adds the growth of income inequality and the lowering of living standards and laments the loss of popular support for the minimum wage law as a way of reducing this inequality. (Never mind that the law probably has never had such an effect in the past.)

To meet these problems, Brinkley would like us to recall some of the forgotten initiatives of the New Deal. The first of these is executive reorganization, for the purpose of strengthening the president and equipping him with

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a "powerful planning mechanism"; but that power must be used in a way that is consistent with the spirit of Vice President Al Gore's "reinventing government" project. But has Brinkley read the Gore Report? Throughout, it calls in effect for reducing the power of the president over the bureaucracy in favor of employee empowerment and citizen service. There is no mention of a powerful planning mechanism.

We should also recall, according to Brinkley, the community-building initiatives of the New Deal, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Farm Security Administration. These projects experimented with "ways of promoting cooperation, community spirit, and mutual responsibility." They did nothing of the kind. The TVA, as Philip Selznick demonstrates in his magisterial account, gave short shrift to community development in favor of generating low-cost electric power. One can disagree with Selznick's explanation as to why this occurred, but that it occurred is not seriously in doubt. The Farm Security Administration may have managed to produce some truly cooperative farms, but the best account of how one actually worked, Edward C. Banfield's *Government Project*, is a story of the failure of cooperation and the near-absence of community. It bears no relation to the idealized version portrayed in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Brinkley is aware, I think, that the New Deal did not do much about community. He is surely right to urge liberals to move away from steadfastly defending the state as the sole alternative to the market. But this is easier urged than obeyed. And Brinkley himself immediately acknowledges that neighborhoods, schools and churches can sometimes be "sources of bigotry and oppression." That, of course, is precisely the dilemma of contemporary American liberalism. Unlike liberalism in other advanced nations, the American version is the clearest and least altered descendant of the Enlightenment. The thinkers of that era emphasized the emancipation of the individual and the expansion of the range of personal liberties. Adam Smith cautioned against what later became known as associationalism and industrial councils; such arrangements, he felt, would always become self-serving conspiracies against the public good. He and others urged a proper watchfulness about government officials; and to this tradition John Stuart Mill added an attack on the right of government or opinion to constrain individual freedom beyond what was necessary for physical protection.

Elsewhere, the Enlightenment was modified—in France, by the tradition of a powerful central regime, in other countries, by the belief that government ought to preside over economic development and minimize the distinction between the public and private spheres. In the United States, however, the Enlightenment mentality came to us intact, protected by a tradition of limited government and a culture of legally defended rights. All historical and philosophical legacies have their costs; the costs of our system include a certain tendency toward self-indulgence, an exaggerated faith in legal rules and an adversarial spirit in legislation and administration. But the more corporatist European version has its costs, too: top-heavy regimes, cartelized economies, ideological parties and high tax rates.

The real economic lesson of the New Deal may be found in its failure to understand production, exemplified by the contempt with which so many of its leaders viewed the problem of business confidence, the indifference that almost all of them displayed toward monetary policy and the push that they gave to the cartelization of agriculture. Such successes as the New Deal had were the beginning of a safety net and the curbing of some anti-competitive business practices—precisely the defining features of American liberalism. To look back at the New Deal for guidance about "the problem of production" is a grievous mistake.

Alan Brinkley has produced an informed and insightful account of how in the 1930s the American version of liberalism survived its greatest challenge. If he now wishes to evaluate its subsequent career, he ought first to study how other versions of liberalism responded to their crises.

JAMES Q. WILSON is the Collins Professor of Management and Public Policy at UCLA and the author most recently of *The Moral Sense* (The Free Press).

The Elements of Style

BY RICHARD JENKYNS

Walter Pater: Lover of Strange Souls by Denis Donoghue

(Knopf, 368 pp., $27.50)

Soon after Max Beerbohm arrived in Oxford as an undergraduate he saw a small, thick, rock-faced man in a shop peering into a portfolio. He was sporting a top hat, bright dogskin gloves and a bristling moustache that gave him a false military air. When Beerbohm was told that this was Walter Pater, he was tempted (he alleged) to leave the university at once.

Pater is scarcely a household name today, and it can be hard now to imagine the obscurely risqué glamour that once hung about him. But *The Renaissance* was, for Oscar Wilde, "that book which has had such a strange influence over my life," "the golden book of spirit and sense, the holy writ of beauty." Yeats, too, said that Pater had written the sacred book for his generation, and called *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater's novel, "the only great prose in modern fiction." More perversely, Yeats found in him the beginning of modern poetry also: when he compiled *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, he opened it with Pater's famous description of the Mona Lisa from his essay on Leonardo da Vinci, arranging it into lines of irregular length as though it were *vers libre*. Even John Buchan, that tough son of the manse, chose Brasenose for his Oxford college because it was where Pater had once taught.

What was all the fuss about? Pater's reputation—his notoriety—was made by *The Renaissance*, first published in 1873 but consisting mostly of essays issued over the previous six years. Three parts of this short book were particularly significant: the essay on Leonardo, with its haunting, incantatory paragraph on the "Lady Lisa"; the essay on Winckelmann, in which readers might detect the faint homoerotic overtones with which the father of art history and his encounter with Greek sculpture were invoked ("He fingers those pagan marbles with unsinged hands, with no sense of shame or loss"); and the conclusion, which created a scandal. In preaching the aesthetic approach to life, Pater's last section seemed to be advocating the ethics of self-indulgence and self-absorption—perhaps worse, for to some of Pater's readers, and indeed to Pater himself, the homoerotic undercurrents in the study of Winckelmann may have sent a

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backwash over into these last lush pages. In later editions he toned down the conclusion for fear, he said, that it might mislead some of the young men into whose hands it might fall.

After *The Renaissance* his most influential work was *Marius the Epicurean*, described by Denis Donoghue in his new book as "a classic few feel themselves stirred to read." It is hardly a novel in the conventional sense, since almost nothing happens in it. Set in Italy during the second century, it meditates upon the mental processes of its protagonist as he ponders different philosophies of life, finally coming into contact with Christianity. He may be on the point of becoming a Christian when he dies suddenly, so that he can be left, with Paterian ambiguity (or evasiveness), as *anima naturaliter Christiana*. Otherwise Pater's fiction consists of a few short stories, if "stories" is the right word for what are again mostly explorations of states of mind. Of these the most remarkable is "The Child in the House," a subtle analysis of a quiet, reclusive childhood that has seemed to a number of its readers to foreshadow Proust. The rest are censured by Donoghue, with justice, as "frigid parables." Pater also wrote a variety of other essays on miscellaneous topics, and his most extensive study of any one subject, a bad book on Plato.

Though he has been dead for 100 years, his reputation, unlike those of most eminent Victorians, has never settled down, and a new study of him is welcome. His manner is elusive, and the great question is whether that elusiveness is subtle and refined or the mask of timidity or emptiness. Has the sphinx a secret? People have admired and disliked him, often both at once. Metaphors of death seem to gather to him, sometimes applied to his style, sometimes seeming to go beyond style to the meaning swaddled within his careful prose. "In the pages of Pater," said George Moore, "the English language lies in state." Beerbohm declared that even in youth he had not admired the man as a stylist:

> Even then I was angry that he should treat English as a dead language, bored by that sedulous ritual wherewith he laid out every sentence as in a shroud—hanging, like a widower, long over its marmoreal beauty or ever he could lay it at length in his book, its sepulchre.

John Addington Symonds, whose own style was a coarser-grained version of Pater's, thought that "there is a kind of Death clinging to the man, which makes his Music (but heavens! how sweet that is!) a little faint and sickly. His view of life gives me the creeps, as old women say." On another occasion he added a different criticism: Pater's theory of life, he suggested, is "the theory of one who has not lived and loved."

And there's the rub. In the conclusion to *The Renaissance*, Pater tells us to aim at "getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time." "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." To some this philosophy seemed simply corrupt. George Eliot, no slave to convention, found the book "poisonous in its . . . false conceptions of life." To others the problem has seemed rather that Pater is not corrupt enough. A timid, reticent existence, a few unrequited crushes on handsome young men: Is that all that this exquisite aestheticism, this beckoning decadence, amounts to? Donoghue quotes pertinently from a review by Mrs. Mark Pattison:

> Get your "pulsations," cries Mr. Pater. Yes but we surely need a criterion of "pulsations." The housemaid who revels in the sensation novels of the "London Journal" holds with Mr. Pater—only less consciously—that it is its pulsations that make life worth the living.

That, once we extract the element of snobbery from it, is well said. Of course aesthetic or spiritual experience can be very intense; but was Pater's? That may seem an unanswerable question, even an impertinent question, about a man's interior life, but not entirely: Pater was a critic of art and literature, and we may reasonably ask whether his approach to these things could produce the quality of experience that he claims for that approach.

This question links up with another: Was Pater a thinker? He has commonly been seen as essentially an artist, a rhapsodist about feeling, concerned with suggestiveness and aesthetic effect, not at all with precision. But another view is possible. Richard Wollheim, himself a philosopher, has argued in a skillful essay that Pater, right or wrong, does set down a coherent, worked-out philosophy. I am not sure that this is true; anyway, it still seems to me that there is something badly astray with Pater's theory and practice. Pater was indifferent to ideas, Donoghue says. That is manifestly the case, though it may well be that Pater's mind was too hazy or willful for him to test his ideas hard or stick to them. On the one hand, he constantly presses for a biographical approach to art and literature, interpreting the paintings of Botticelli and Giorgione, and even the philosophy of Plato, as expressions of individual temperament. On the other hand, he seems to conceive of aesthetic effect

Bridled Ambition

Why Countries Constrain Their Nuclear Capabilities

by MITCHELL REISS

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as the subjective, imaginative work of the perceiver.

There appears to be an inconsistency of theory here; there is assuredly a failure in critical practice. Donoghue observes that

> Pater isn't exhilarated by the independent existence of a thing.... He is not interested in a thing apart from the mind that engages with it. He gives little or no credit to what is deemed to exist apart from him; credit is reserved for the production of new experiences.

This seems to me a true criticism and a damning one. One cannot read far in Pater without starting to notice that all his subjects—Leonardo, Plato, Michelangelo—soon turn into versions of himself, wistful, languid, gently melancholy, haunted by dreams and vague yearnings. There is a lack of curiosity and a narrowness of imagination that must be weaknesses in any critic. Most seriously for Pater's ideal of life, it becomes hard to believe in the richness and the intensity of aesthetic responses that are so slack and solipsistic. It is one thing to claim a very high value for being penetrated by the effect of genius; it is another thing to claim as much for looking at one's own reflection in a mirror.

Donoghue tellingly contrasts Pater, "already a relativist, a modernist of drift," with the passionate desire of Ruskin and Hopkins to see the objects of art and nature as they really are. He cites Hopkins's remark, "What you look hard at seems to look hard at you." Pater seldom looked hard at anything, not even at himself. An interesting exception comes in his essay on Botticelli. He was unusual for his time in his high estimate of Botticelli, whose paintings were not yet the universally known icons that they have become. For once, he wants us to know about *The Birth of Venus*, and he gives us the kind of detail that Ruskin would, "the grey water..., the sea 'showing his teeth,' as it moves, in thin lines of foam, and sucking in, one by one, the falling roses, each severe in outline, plucked off short at the stalk, but embrowned a little, as Botticelli's flowers always are."

But such writing is rare in his work. When he tells us that the Mona Lisa has died many times like the vampire and been a diver in deep seas and been Leda and St. Anne and that all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, he is composing a fantasy on a theme by Leonardo, not bringing us closer to the picture in the Louvre. A number of the pictures supposedly by Leonardo and Giorgione that he discusses are not now attributed to those painters, and there is evidence that Pater himself knew that some of the old attributions were suspect. He was not perturbed, Donoghue says. But he should have been. If you are an aesthete, the quality of what you are looking at ought to matter to you, and if you believe that art is the expression of individual personality, you ought to care which personality you are confronting.

In his later life especially, Pater loved to merge one age into another, to speak of those Greek statues that seemed to anticipate the Middle Ages, those Gothic buildings that presented a classical balance and proportion. Such blurrings of the boundaries produced some of his most subtle and pleasingly slithery writing, but when he applied this habit of mind to more theoretical questions Pater dissolved differences that were better preserved. "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music," is one of his most famous sayings. That sounds sophisticated, but it does not survive scrutiny. All art? The danger in such an approach is that it may miss the distinctive quality of each art, and that in the case of literature it may prefer mere sound, mere mesmerism at the expense of meaning.

"Art comes to you," Pater says, "professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake." T. S. Eliot retorted that this was demonstrably untrue, and though Donoghue oddly denies it, Eliot was right. Try Pater's claim against, say, *The Divine Comedy*, the Sistine Chapel or the *St. Matthew Passion*, and its wrongness should be evident at once. Donoghue remarks that when Pater sees art as aspiring toward music, "he doesn't mean opera or programme-music, but pure music," and later he adds, "If you are listening to a Beethoven quartet, you do well not to be thinking of anything else, even of sin, expiation, redemption and God."

The trouble with this admonition is that it puts poor Beethoven in his place along with the rest of us. He chose to put into his last quartets some easy little tunes that seem fitted for the human voice, and to title one of his movements "Sacred song of thanks to the Deity from a convalescent." In his last symphony, for that matter, music finally aspires toward the condition of speech. There are multiple ironies at work here: one art form may momentarily reach out toward another, but that reaching out has point and significance because the different art forms are in reality so far apart. Broad generalizations about "all art" and the unspotted purity of pure music miss the true, delightful complexity of things.

Donoghue's is a strange book. He gives the impression that he began with the aim of making large claims for Pater and bringing him back to the center of the stage, but then found himself more and more irritated with the man as he went on. He is often critical of Pater, and sometimes he is contemptuous; but he does not like to hear similar criticisms from other people. Indeed, there is a touch of the bar-brawler about him. He pays proper tribute to Christopher Ricks's clever essay on Pater's style, but then picks some obscure quarrel with him. He tells us that Edward Thomas wrote a pot-boiling book about Pater (but that was eighty years ago) and fights that. T. S. Eliot made an urbanely brutal assault on Pater, and Donoghue takes him on, too.

Sometimes Donoghue seems to wish that he were writing about someone else; there are many puzzling digressions on Yeats, Joyce, Wallace Stevens, even Dante. One has the sense of a person of cultivated, well-stocked mind finding analogies that are interesting to himself but that he has not succeeded in conveying to his reader. Occasionally the breadth of cultural reference verges on self-parody. On a single page we find, "Thomas Mann said ... Nietzsche said ... as Adorno says ... Kierkegaard has noted ... Hegel invokes..."; turn the page and there are allusions to Joyce, Aristotle, Aquinas, Borges, Croce, Keats and Bergson. At such moments Donoghue has an excess of intellectual baggage to declare.

The book is not easy to read: sometimes I found the argument hard to follow, sometimes I could not follow it at all. The obscurities and the vagaries would be worthwhile if one had complete confidence in Donoghue's authority, but there are some inaccuracies and some misinterpretations. Sometimes he allows an uncertainty. In *Marius* Pater writes,

> He was acquiring what it is the chief function of all higher education to impart, the art, namely, of so relieving the ideal or poetic traits, the elements of distinction, in our everyday life—of so exclusively living in them—that the unadorned remainder of it, the mere drift or *debris* of our days, comes to be as though it were not.

Donoghue comments, "'Relieving' is not clear to me, unless he means it in a military sense, to relieve a position by guarding it against the enemy, relieving the elements of distinction in our everyday lives by fending off the characterless or mundane elements." This would be a bizarre interpretation even if the meaning were seriously in doubt, but surely it is not. Pater means "to set in relief" as on a sculptured panel, and with characteristic carefulness he gives the metaphor a little more life by picking

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it up with "unadorned" later in the sentence, before sliding (again characteristically) into another metaphor of a different kind. Donoghue seems to have let the stream of consciousness flow: ideas have come tumbling out, good ideas and bad ideas, and he has not paused long enough to sort them. Still, he is too perceptive and intelligent a critic, and despite his moments of irritation too engaged with his subject, for his book not to contain good things. There is an admirable chapter of close analysis of Pater's style.

How large did Pater loom, and what is he worth today? At the very end Donoghue suggests that his insistence on the autonomy of aesthetic values might help to rescue the study of literature from the tyranny of political, social and moral rectitude. But he has earlier warned us that no writer is on oath in his last paragraph, and more consistently he wants to make claims of a somewhat different kind. One is for Pater's effect on other authors. His influence on the aesthetic movement of the late nineteenth century is undoubtedly very large; indeed, as far as England is concerned, he may be reckoned its founder and prophet. Donoghue wants to go further and see him as "a shade or trace in virtually every writer of any significance from Hopkins and Wilde to Ashbery"—not as an influence but as a presence (a rather Paterian evasion).

As for the man himself, "Pater's significance is that he invented the Pateresque: he added to literature a certain tone, a style." That is fair praise. One has only to compare him with his imitators—with the florid blowsiness of Wilde's aesthetic prose, for instance—to see his distinction. And as Donoghue indicates, this is partly because his style is also a matter of tone. It is not only a question of expressing things beautifully, but of having an original cast of mind to give expression to.

For all his limitations, Pater still repays reading. Parts of *The Renaissance*, whether you think them masterly or meretricious, are at least unforgettable. *Marius the Epicurean* is a fascinating book, better than Donoghue allows, refined in its psychology—not thanks to individualized characters but to the exploration of sensibility and mental experiences. Again one may feel momentarily a faint foreshadowing of Proust. Donoghue interestingly gives space to Henry James's thoughts about Pater, and in that subtle observer we find the mixture of respect, disdain, irritation and enthrallment that other readers have less articulately felt. For James, Pater is "curiously negative and faintly-grey ... faint, pale, embarrassed, exquisite Pater ... little grey, pretty Pater"; "He has too little point, and a kind of wilful weakness; but he's divinely uncommon." And James compares him to a luminous matchbox at the bedside: "He shines in the uneasy gloom—vaguely, and has phosphorence, not a flame." Certainly, if he did have a flame, it was not hard or gem-like. He flickers mysteriously in a wide, dark space, but he makes the shadows suggest strange, haunting shapes, and like the lady's candle he sheds a lovely light.

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Contract With Reality

BY COLIN MCGINN

The Construction of Social Reality by John Searle

(The Free Press, 241 pp., $25)

When philosophers concern themselves with what fundamentally exists, they are apt to limit themselves to physical facts and mental facts, with perhaps a soupçon of the abstract thrown in. There are mountains and muons, beliefs and tickles, and maybe numbers and propositions. Then questions are raised about how these broad ontological categories are related, these questions constituting the core of traditional metaphysics. But this is to ignore at least one other broad category of facts: the social ones. We also have incomes and marriages and presidencies. How are facts about societies to be fitted into our general ontological framework? How, in particular, are they to be connected with mental and physical facts? What is, if you will forgive the expression, the ontology of civilization?

There is a reason that philosophers tend not to be powerfully exercised by questions of social ontology, and it is that social facts are less primitive than the other facts. Social facts depend for their existence on mental and physical facts, but the opposite is not the case. This is the basic intuition from which John Searle starts his inquiry: the ontological dependence of the social on the nonsocial. Searle's aim is to develop a theory that spells out the nature and consequences of this dependence.

Consider money, a familiar social institution. What is it that constitutes something as money? How does it come to exist? What, as Searle puts it, is the structure of the fact of money? Clearly it is not a matter of the physical features of those items with which we conduct our economic exchanges. It is the way we *use* those pieces of paper and those flat disks of metal. Searle builds his theory of money-creating human use around three basic concepts. First, collective intentionality is the possession by a group of agents of certain mental states, particularly beliefs and intentions. In a soccer game, for instance, *we* (the team) are attempting to score a goal, and what *I* do occurs within that collective intention. Second, functions are assigned to things when agents begin to treat them as having purposes, as when we assign to bits of metal and paper the function of acting as a medium of exchange. These functions are imposed on external reality; they do not exist antecedently to human interpretation. Third, constitutive rules are those rules that create, by human agreement or stipulation, a new sort of fact. Chess is constituted by its rules; it is not that the rules of chess regulate some prior independent activity.

The outlines of Searle's theory run as follows. Take a dollar bill and consider it only in its physical aspect, as an object obeying the laws of physics. By virtue of what does this merely physical thing acquire the character of a unit of exchange, a repository of value and so on? It does so because we, by collective intentionality, assign to it the status of acting as a medium of exchange and so on, where this new status cannot be performed by the dollar bill solely by dint of its physical properties. We lay down rules that constitute the physical object as having properties that go beyond anything in its physical nature. We thus confer new powers on the object, powers to buy and sell, to conserve wealth. We impose upon it a certain status, where this status represents our agreement to treat the

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object in ways that depend upon our having made that agreement.

This is the basis of our acceptance of the dollar bill in economic transactions. So we impose status functions on things against the background of our collective mentality. And so social reality comes into being. "The central span on the bridge from physics to society is collective intentionality, and the decisive movement on that bridge in the creation of social reality is the collective intentional imposition of function on entities that cannot perform those functions without that imposition." Money is money because we agree to treat it that way. In Searle's terminology, money is an observer-dependent fact. Thus money differs from mountains and screwdrivers, because mountains exist whether or not we believe in them and screwdrivers can perform their function by virtue of their physical features. For Searle, social institutions are distinguished by their inability to perform their function without a common acceptance of their legitimacy. In a sense, they depend on faith.

All this is explained with Searle's customary clarity and straightforwardness. The prose is spiky and simple. No stone is left unkicked. Polemical arrows thud into soft targets. Searle's book is almost pretentiously unpretentious, and the style is well-suited to the project: a systematic and orderly dissection of our ordinary concepts of familiar things. Searle's aim is to make us see that social facts are unmysterious and yet remarkable. They are unmysterious in that they result completely from the raw materials and mechanisms that he identifies, which are themselves sufficiently perspicuous and anterior to what they are used to explain. And they are remarkable because what we fondly think of as civilization depends on the existence of these constructions, which are held in place by nothing other than a kind of groundless collective contract.

Society would collapse if people were to cease agreeing to assign appropriate functions to things like wedding ceremonies, dollar bills, English sentences. And since all of these assignments are essentially arbitrary, there is, in a sense, nothing stopping us from ceasing to accord them the status that we now accord them. Mountains will stay there no matter how much we might wish them away, but it would take nothing more than a collective decision to dismantle totally the institutional fabric of society.

This, Searle surmises, is the reason we tend to invest certain ceremonies with so much pomp and glitter: we recognize that it all comes down to one person agreeing with another, and we don't like the netless feeling that results. The emblems of authority are there to reassure us that it won't all come tumbling down around our ears. Human agreement is a fragile thing, and it is hard to accept that it is the only barrier that stands between us and chaos. Imagine what it would be like if people began to deny that the words you utter mean what you take them to mean, or if your diplomas were decreed invalid, or if people treated your dollar bills as bits of worthless paper. What if the institution of citizenship were to be abrogated? There would be nothing to fall back on, in observer-independent reality, to enforce the kinds of rights that we normally take for granted. These social institutions work, fundamentally, only because we say they do.

At the root of Searle's treatment of social facts is a distinction between brute facts and humanly constructed facts. There are two kinds of brute facts: the physical entities onto which we impose institutional functions, and the mental capacities that make this imposition possible. Neither sort of fact is itself humanly constructed. Rather, we construct social facts on the basis of such brute facts. Social reality thus presupposes a reality whose origin is not social. It cannot be, then, that reality in general is socially constructed; on the contrary, social reality is non-socially constructed. There cannot be social facts without the logically prior existence of brute facts that are not the result of any social mechanism. Society is constructed on a bedrock of antecedent realities, both physical and mental, which are entirely objective in the sense that they are not products of human action or cognition. The raw materials of social construction are independent of all such construction.

Indeed, if we conjoin Searle's theory of society with the views about the mind that he has expressed elsewhere, we get, in effect, a reduction of social facts to physical and biological ones. For he maintains that states of consciousness, which are what intentionality depends on, are just biological properties of the brain, no different in principle from neural and biochemical properties. Thus collective intentionality, which is the main engine of social construction, is really a biological feature of the human species. Society is biology imposed outward. It is a property of the brain that has attached itself to external things, giving them functions they would not otherwise have had. Culture, then, is just one manifestation of our biological nature, and has no autonomous existence. And this is simply because the mind itself is a biological fact.

Searle is by no means oblivious to the polemical thrust of his analysis of society. Indeed, he revels in it with the kind of breezy gusto we have come to know and enjoy:

> Derrida, as far as I can tell, does not have an argument. He simply declares that there is nothing, outside of texts (*Il n'y a pas de "hors texte"*). And in any case, in a subsequent polemical response to some objections of mine, he apparently takes it all back.... What is one to do, then, in the face of weak or even nonexistent arguments for a conclusion that seems preposterous?

Searle's analysis, as he points out, supplies a kind of transcendental deduction of realism from the nature of social facts: there can be social facts only because

Illustrations

I knew the rudiments: his
into hers. What I lacked
were illustrations. My parents
handed me a solemn book.
It would explain
what they could not. Feverish,
I browsed the chapters ("Eggs,"
"Pollen and Sperm"),
past grainy fish roe
(black and white); a nest
of speckled eggs, a flustered
German Shepherd bitch
who nursed her puppies
like the Roman She-Wolf
standing up. All this
I took for metaphor.
Likewise, the sad
fallopian lyre, the bristling
snapdragons, the peacock's
gorgeous poker-hand
of plumes. Only to reach the final
chapter, where an uxorious
bull and cow moose browsed
in a soggy glade, fondling
the ferns with blowzy lips. And *this*,
it seemed, was frenzy's end: the bog,
the weeds, the slow beasts
cumbrous in their bodies.

JEAN NORDHAUS

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there are already brute non-social facts that provide the basis for social construction. This inverts the way of thinking associated with so-called "social constructionism," in which it is apparently maintained that *all* facts are somehow the product of social realities.

I agree completely with Searle that such views are absurd, that they have no respectable argumentative support, that in the end they always rest on an elementary confusion between reality and our representation of it. Of course the universe could exist without there being any human societies; it did for quite a while. (It is equally obvious that there could not exist human representations of the universe without humans.) I recommend, a little urgently, Searle's patient and devastating dissection of the social constructionist way of thinking: it doesn't take very long to read and it could do a great deal of good in many quarters.

Since his theory of society is premised on commonsense realism about the physical and mental worlds, Searle gives us an extra couple of chapters on these more basic metaphysical questions. The discussion here is more purely philosophical, especially in the chapter that sets out to rehabilitate what is known as the correspondence theory of truth. According to that theory, there are language-independent facts, such as the fact that snow is white, and we make statements corresponding to these facts, such as the statement *that* snow is white, and so truth consists in a relation between language and the world. This may seem obvious to the naïve reader, but it has been denied by most twentieth-century philosophers. Searle's trick is to show that this banality conceals no logical solecisms. We can safely conclude, I think, that his theory of the social cannot be faulted at the underlying metaphysical level.

But that does not mean that it cannot be faulted at all. The theory offers a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of social facts, so we need to ask whether it succeeds in these analytical aims, if it is to give an adequate account of social concepts. As to whether the conditions are necessary, I think there are problems with the use of the notion of collective intentionality. First, it is not clear that we need to accept Searle's doctrine of primitively defined "we-intentions" in order to get social facts off the ground. There are cases in our experience in which shared and coordinated "I-intentions" will do the job. If I intend to treat certain pieces of paper as money and so do you and so does everybody else, then we shall have an institution of money; it is not necessary that the group of us has a collective intention expressible as "we intend to treat this as money." It may well be that "we-intentions" are irreducible, and that our social practices are generally backed by them, but it does not seem logically required for the assignment of status functions that such intentions be present.

Second, and more important, the requirement of full-blown intentionality looks too strong. Consider ants and bees. These are rightly described as social insects, but they do not have beliefs and intentions. What they have are dispositions and capacities that interact to produce socially coordinated behavior; and they form societies by virtue of these interactive dispositions. Searle might object that such societies don't generate functions for objects that go beyond their physical features, so that nothing *symbolic* results from ant or bee behavior, nothing analogous to money and marriage vows. But that seems wrong. Ants mark their territory by means of chemical signals that do not block others by sheer physical insurmountability; and this kind of symbolic territory-marking is regarded by Searle, in the human case, as paradigmatically social and institutional.

So status function can be assigned in the absence of ordinary intentionality. Famously, bees perform symbolic dances that convey the location of nectar to other bees. This is precisely a case of taking a physical phenomenon—a mere wiggle—and imposing upon it a function that goes beyond its physical features; the wiggle plays a social role in bee colonies. The point here is that the imposition of function, even representational function, does not necessarily depend on the agents having the kind of mind that we have, with our conscious intentions, contracts and rules. Social facts can arise from more primitive sorts of disposition, as they do in these non-human cases.

Neither does Searle provide properly sufficient conditions for sociality, and this for a simple logical reason. A social fact must, by definition, involve a group of individuals, not a single individual in isolation. Searle's actual examples are all of this kind, but his analysis does not itself secure that result. It might seem to him that it must since it uses the notion of collective intentionality, but in fact this does not deliver the intended result. The problem is that the imposed function might relate only to a single individual, despite its imposition by a group of individuals, and so will not give us a genuinely social fact. Conversely, a single individual could stipulate a function that relates to a social group, as when a king decrees a new coin legal tender in society at large.

Suppose we all decide that the full moon is to have the function of indicating to John Searle that it is time he trimmed his sideburns, and suppose he then duly trims them. This function is defined relative to a single individual and its fulfillment does not involve anybody else; it is not that we have decided that everyone should trim their sideburns at the full moon. What we have here is an individualistic status function. The reason examples like this are possible is simply that Searle's basic concept—assigning a function that goes beyond the merely physical features of the object—does not itself import any social element, at least on the natural understanding of "social." Institutional it may be, but it is not thereby a group fact.

This suggests that Searle's book is misnamed, since what he is really analyzing is the notion of stipulated or intention-dependent fact, not a social fact in the usual sense. His primary contrast is between the natural objective features of things and the features that we impose by human decision; but that contrast does not logically coincide with the distinction between the individual and the social. Robinson Crusoe can confer status functions on things, but that does not ease his isolation.

The only way to get society into the picture is explicitly to build into the notion of function the idea of a function that concerns a group of individuals. Since this will work only if the collective intentions that impose the function match its scope, we need to suppose that the intentions themselves have a content that relates to a social concept: there must be an intention that a certain social institution shall come into being. But then, of course, we are presupposing that we already have social concepts in play; we are not constructing them from other non-social concepts. What Searle is really explaining is how we convert our social concepts into social realities.

But these are the objections of the trained analytical philosopher. They should not be taken to undermine the general shape of Searle's account. He is right to observe that the social depends on the non-social, and that the driving force of institutional facts is simply the human propensity to invest more significance in things than their objective nature can bear. Human creativity is at the root of social facts. There is a reality out there that does not owe its existence and its nature to our creative acts, and what we then do is create further

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realities by imposing meaning on otherwise meaningless things. Thus we have language and money and weddings and academic gowns and guest passes. The world bifurcates into the created and the uncreated, though there cannot be the former without the latter.

But isn't all this obvious, even banal? Not banal enough, in our post-post-structuralist intellectual life. I wonder if Searle would have written this book were it not for the polemical purpose of refuting certain fashionable doctrines to the effect that reality itself is a construction from human institutions; and yet, even if Searle's book may be low on primary philosophical thrills, it is bursting with plain and necessary right-headedness. He has performed a genuine service in bringing his rigor to bear on the lazy and pernicious relativism latent in the idea that reality is just what we humans choose it to be. *The Construction of Social Reality* might not exist if it were not for the bad ideas of other people, but there are many important books about which that may be said.

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Afterwords

BY JAY TOLSON

The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in An Electronic Age by Sven Birkerts

(Faber and Faber, 231 pp., $22.95)

It's not easy to pick up a book about the impending death of a practice once thought to be at the heart of the well-lived life. I mean the practice of reading, especially the kind of serious reading we were taught was not only the means to an education, but its self-delighting end. And though it may be comforting to hear one's twilight fears echoed and elaborated by someone so steadily persuasive as Sven Birkerts, it's hard to shake the feeling that his book would more profitably sit in the hands of those who are least likely to turn to it: the growing number of "wired" citizens who consider books, and book-reading, quaint atavisms in the evolution of information technology. This book's message is apt to seem to them as distant as its medium.

The medium in this case is the old-fashioned discursive essay—personal, reflective, edifying and (true to the title of the collection) elegiac. Through the fifteen essays gathered here, two themes march solemnly, purposefully and often hand in hand. The first is that the reading of good books is an essential, and essentializing, activity: that it deepens and individualizes us, cultivates our inwardness and even our souls. The second is that the act of reading—specifically, the serious and solitary engagement with works of great literature—is endangered by the rise and expansion of the modern technology of electronic "interactivity."

Few readers will have difficulty embracing the first theme. Indeed, as readers, they will have a harder time believing that anyone who doesn't engage with great books can possess a soul worth wondering about. This readerly species of hubris in fact merits consideration, not least because it persists despite the efforts of some of the more canny modernist writers to challenge its blinkered arrogance. Joyce's Leopold Bloom is a perfect case in point. This supreme creature of the Dublin middle class, this urban stroller and relisher of the everyday, is not a reader in the sense Birkerts would understand. That is, Bloom would never sit down of an evening with a novel by Flaubert; a line from Yeats would probably baffle him. Yet Joyce makes it abundantly clear—it is practically the point of his novel—that Bloom, in another sense, is a profoundly discerning reader of the world's manifold and seemingly random signs, whether they be details from ephemeral newspaper stories or advertising slogans, the muttered words of his fellow citizens, or the shifting moods of his wife. That a writer of such exquisitely mandarin learning could have arrived at so democratic an appreciation of the interior life of an extraordinary ordinary man is one of the marvels of *Ulysses*.

The matter of Bloom is not tangential to Birkerts's larger argument, as Birkerts well knows. One of his essays explicitly takes on the charge that literary sensibility (or what Birkerts calls "coherent inwardness") is no more than an elitist affectation. To some extent, though, all of the essays here force one to ask whether "people of the book" are indeed guardians of the sacred and the true, or just well-intentioned but ultimately misguided idolaters who mistake the vessel for the contents in their efforts to perpetuate a cult of esotericism, high learning, difficulty.

Birkerts makes a good case against the second conclusion and in favor of the broadest, most democratic claims of a literary education. He does so partly through a sympathetic *autobiographia literaria* that tells how he came to books and how his life has been shaped in service to them. Birkerts's literary education had a very unstuffy, American quality—after college, he supported himself by working in bookstores, fighting off depression and self-doubt with voracious reading—and the self-mocking candor with which he describes himself is winning. "I saw my role," he writes of his bookstore years, "as quasi-priestly: I was channeling the nourishing word to the people who wanted it most. I had to feel that because, otherwise, I was just putting in time at a low-paying retail job, not at all ministering to the life of the culture or moving along a worthy career path."

But even while the priestly metaphor is ironic here, it hints at a somewhat less democratic notion of the literary life. Simply put, Birkerts believes that literature has a salvific purpose, though salvation, to him, is very much a worldly matter: its other name is individuality. We go to serious reading, Birkerts suggests, out of a sense of self-insufficiency (a secular variant, one might say, of Original Sin): "To open a book voluntarily is at some level to remark the insufficiency either of one's life or of one's orientation toward it." And what do readers accomplish in reading? Typically, Birkerts explains, they establish their "inwardness, the more reflective component of their self, in the space that reading opened up." That space is more temporal than physical—not the time of sequential, measurable units but time beyond time, in which the reader can see that, "God or no God, life has a unitary pattern inscribed within it, a pattern that we could discern for ourselves if we could somehow lay the whole of our experience out like a map."

If such arguments have a familiar ring, it is because Birkerts embraces the Arnoldian ideal of art as the last stay against anarchy, the noble stand-in for

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the lost established creeds. He is an epigone among the literary intellectuals, critical and creative, who self-consciously defined their labors in priestly terms. According to the high modernist tradition elaborated by this clerisy, the artist creates the works whose unity, clarity and integrity the critic then identifies and sets forth before the Common Reader.

Over the years, the critical terminology—objective correlative, negative capability, dissociation of sensibility, irony, authenticity, the anxiety of influence—has come to form a kind of catechism for initiates into the literary culture. The terms have become precepts not only for reading well but also for living well. They constitute an ethos and a doctrine, at whose center is an act of submission. One submits, Birkerts makes clear, to the authority of the author:

> This "domination" by the author has been, at least until now, the *point* of reading and writing. The author masters the resources of language to create a vision that will engage and in some way overpower the reader; the reader goes to the work to be subjected to the creative will of another.

Although there is much that is appealing about this metaphysics of reading as "self-making," it is a doctrine grounded in specific historical conditions, with problematic origins and an equally problematic demise. Birkerts, however, scants the historical question, and thus exposes his defense of the reading culture to easy attack. When, exactly, does he see the emergence of those practices of reading that nurtured the modern ideal of the individual? Does he find them in the stirrings of the Renaissance, in the efforts of the humanists to extend and expand the educational uses of reading? What is the significance of the fact that the kind of reading Birkerts values emerged precisely as revealed religion was beginning to lose its absolute and universal hold? Was it, at least at first, an alternative mode of the religious life, with Protestantism being the church of self-justification through the unmediated encounter with the Word?

Some acknowledgement of the historical dimension might have led Birkerts to see that the demise of literary culture is no more the death of reading than the collapse of Christendom was the end of Christianity. What we may be seeing in this "reading reformation" is the end of a certain institutionalized, hieratic approach to reading, one that subtly reified itself as a sacred thing. Reading, as it literally escapes the confines of the book—and the authority of the clerisy that instructs in the correct ways of reading—may lose much of its mystique, but it's possible, at least arguable, that there was something far too rarefied and precious about that mystique.

It's possible, too, that there was something terribly confused about the confidence that the Romantics and their Modernist successors placed in the moral and spiritual adequacy of art. There were hints early on—in Pound, in Yeats, in Eliot and indeed throughout post-Romantic European culture—that the literary ethos comported quite easily with self-delusion, moral vacuity and barbarism. Art can produce monsters, just as it can be made by monsters. Then, too, to force art into the role of moral or spiritual guide is in some ways to trivialize and overdomesticate it. As Lionel Trilling suggested, great books can lead to the abyss as well as to the Grail.

It may be for the good, then, that reading is turning renegade in our time. As reading resituates itself under less strongly institutionalized conditions, we may need fewer Jeremiahs of the literary culture and more critics who accept the variety of ways in which people find a "coherent inwardness." Birkerts is surely right to say that reading teaches us how to cultivate our solitude. But he forgets the lesson of Leopold Bloom by suggesting that reading is the only way to cultivate such inwardness. The dire either/or arguments about reading won't work. The wired generation has heard them too many times, from the likes of Neil Postman and Theodore Roszak and others who bemoan the incursions of the buzzing electronic media upon the quieter, more solitary business of "self-making." Such admonitions, often delivered with Sunday school solemnity, now provoke titters from the pews, if not indifference.

Similarly, to Birkerts's assertions that electronic interactivity spells the end of "a society of isolated individuals," the wired generation will have a ready retort: "What was so great about that splendid isolation? And aren't we building communities through the Net, truly democratic communities in which authority—derived from knowledge—is dissolved or at least spread among more people?" For that matter, I'm not sure they'll be convinced by Birkerts's claim that readers are the last of the heroic individualists. Under the new dispensation, Birkerts says, we "no longer prize the loner, the dreamer, the disaffected protester, or the tormented misfit." As poorly as I understand the world of the Internet, I do know that the very idea of the hacker is bound up with renegade individualism.

A more nuanced argument is called for, one that includes greater sympathy for the wired world and its human complexities, and perhaps a little more honesty about the failures of literary culture. In the world of electronic interactivity, for example, there has been, and will continue to be, a struggle to protect the freedom, spontaneity and individuality of the early Net (personified, again, by the hacker) against great public and commercial interests that want to dominate, control and profit from the expanding network. The politics of this struggle have been widely reported upon in the press. But the human dimensions of the conflict have been largely ignored by high literature, possibly to its peril.

The reasons for such neglect are not hard to find. Literary people are famously impatient with technology. It vexes them when it doesn't bore them; technophiles seem juvenile in their fascination with gadgets and tinkering. Birkerts, to his credit, chides writers for such genteel disdain and calls on contemporary novelists to attempt to make sense of the new consciousness now being created by the emerging media. He even suggests that this might be the great theme of our time, and mentions briefly—too briefly for the purposes of his book—some of the better writers who have ventured into the new territory. Yet from what Birkerts says elsewhere, one would have a hard time understanding why this new consciousness would be anything worth exploring.

Birkerts should insist on more from the literary culture he so passionately defends: more daring on the part of our best writers in confronting the electronic culture, and (simplistic as it may sound) more confidence among our teachers in the value of pleasurable engagements with great literary work. Birkerts would like to update the arguments of Trilling, to extend the defense of the liberal uses of a literary imagination into our electronic age. This is a worthy goal, and he has taken a step toward it. The next step would be to acknowledge more bravely the darker side of literary experience, its power to disorder the senses as well as to order them. Literature's window onto chaos and unpredictability may even be what keeps serious reading alive in the uncentered virtual worlds that are now emerging.

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NEW YORK DIARIST

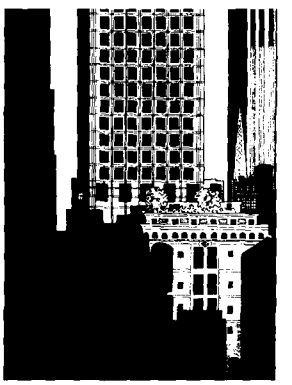
Openings

ONE THURSDAY NOT TOO LONG ago, as dusk was giving 57th Street some of the drama of a theater at the moment when the houselights go down, I turned into the lobby of a building just west of Fifth Avenue and took the crowded elevator up to the eighth floor, where Nell Blaine's show was opening at the Fischbach Gallery. All around were Blaine's recent paintings, bouquets and landscapes painted with fast, blazing strokes of color. And in the middle of the room, in the wheelchair to which she's been confined since contracting polio in Greece in 1959, was Nell Blaine herself, still in the thick of things half a century after she first came to New York from Virginia at the age of 20 to study with Hans Hofmann. The Hofmann connection is much more than a historical footnote, for each of Blaine's intricate tilting blossoms is like a superconcentrated burst of Hofmann's reckless joy.

I SAT DOWN IN ONE OF THE CHAIRS set up next to Blaine's wheelchair, and just then someone else came up to compliment her on a particularly magical watercolor, of a snowy Riverside Drive illuminated by street lamps and a limpid blue sky. "I did it before dawn," Blaine explained in her matter-of-fact, almost-middle-American intonations. "Sometimes I just can't sleep. If I see something like that I just have to paint it, no matter what time it is. Of course it's really tough on the people who help me get set up." Meanwhile, a man Blaine introduced as one of her jazz aficionado friends slid into the chair at Blaine's other side—Blaine had played jazz drums in the 1940s and 1950s—and I excused myself. I was due at another celebration, for the painter John Heliker, around the corner at the Kraushaar Gallery.

I GOT TO THE GALLERY ONLY A FEW minutes before Heliker walked in. Heliker's recent landscapes and figures—with their bright yet flickery atmosphere woven out of big, loose brushstrokes—filled most of the main room; in a side gallery hung the smaller, more closely worked semi-abstractions, with their echoes of Klee and Feininger, that he was doing in the decade after he'd joined the gallery. It's been fifty years since Heliker first exhibited here, and I doubt he would have made it to the opening if it hadn't been such an auspicious anniversary, for he was obviously exhausted, only just out of the hospital after a bout with pneumonia. But his long elegant face, framed by a thatch of white hair and a small goatee, still had the serene charm that I'd admired when I first met Heliker, some twenty-five years ago, when I studied painting with him at Columbia College.

ALTHOUGH THE SHOW GAVE A good sense of what Heliker can do, it didn't include any of my favorites. These are the blue-green interiors in which two or three dreamily sketchy figures, joined in an easy-going, beyond-words kind of friendship, sit around a table or look at paintings or work at an etching press. But the emotion in these mysteriously intimate paintings could be felt all around the gallery when, after dinner, Heliker's friends got up to recall scenes from Cornelia Street in the 1950s or the WPA Art Project in the 1930s and salute a painter they'd known almost all their lives.



THE BUSINESS OF HANGING UP paintings and having people come and take a look never really changes, nor does how much it matters to the artist. Artists are always acutely conscious that it's only during the month or so in which a show is up that people have the opportunity to see what they've been doing. Yet you can't help being aware, when you arrive at a Blaine or Heliker opening, that they've been doing this forever; it makes the consistency of the process all the more astonishing. They've been at it since well before the great divide in twentieth-century American art, which came in the 1950s, when the aftereffects of the GI Bill, plus an upsurge in college art departments, the Hollywoodization of rebellion and a thousand other things turned the artist's life into a dimension of middle-class life.

WHEN HELIKER AND BLAINE FIRST arrived in New York, brilliant young artists were fed up with the old Greenwich Village, with its brown velvet jackets and berets, its self-conscious archaicisms and gimcrack mysticism. These painters, who were evolving a casual, stripped-down approach to a life in art, had something to do with the modernization of the American avant-garde. But by now Heliker and Blaine have lived long enough to see that modernized avant-garde begin to calcify. And their old irreverence keeps them sane, enables them to see that the modern avant-garde they helped to invent can look as mannered and irrelevant as the brown-velvet bohemia did some sixty years ago.

WHEN YOU'RE AN ARTIST, KNOWing a lot is often less important than knowing the exact limits of what you know. Blaine and Heliker take an almost clinical interest in the ineffable; they have a pretty sure sense of when being inexact is the only way to be exact. When I look at one of Heliker's paintings, I often find myself wondering why he has given a resolute outline to one object and glanced over the one right next to it—and then I realize that it's the very process of wondering about such things that makes the picture breathe.

BY THE STANDARDS of 1990s art, both Heliker and Blaine could be labeled artistic conservatives. Certainly it's no surprise to find *The New York Times* floating the C word in a Blaine review. Yet their conservatism, if that's what one wants to call painting on rectangles of canvas in oils, is grounded in a cool, analytical temper; and from what I know of both of them, I would say the key to their independence, both inside and outside the studio, is the belief that each convention must be analyzed and then accepted or rejected in accordance with the results of that analysis. These artists found the key to the modern spirit not in wholesale revolt but in piece-by-piece evolution. That's not a bad approach for artists who are now picking their way through the wreckage of the 1950s avant-garde.

IN ONE OF BLAINE'S RECENT paintings, I noticed, lying on the tabletop just next to a bouquet of flowers, a black fly, apparently dead. It was a motif I didn't recall ever seeing in her work before, and I asked Blaine about it. She explained that it was not a dead fly but a dead bee, and I thought to myself, yes, it's the perfect memento mori for an artist who has spent her life zeroing in on flowers. Blaine must have sensed that I was on the verge of oversimplifying her experience by turning a complicated vignette into a one-dimensional metaphor. "Of course that bee isn't a symbol of anything," she hastened to add. "It just died right there, and so I painted it."

JED PERL

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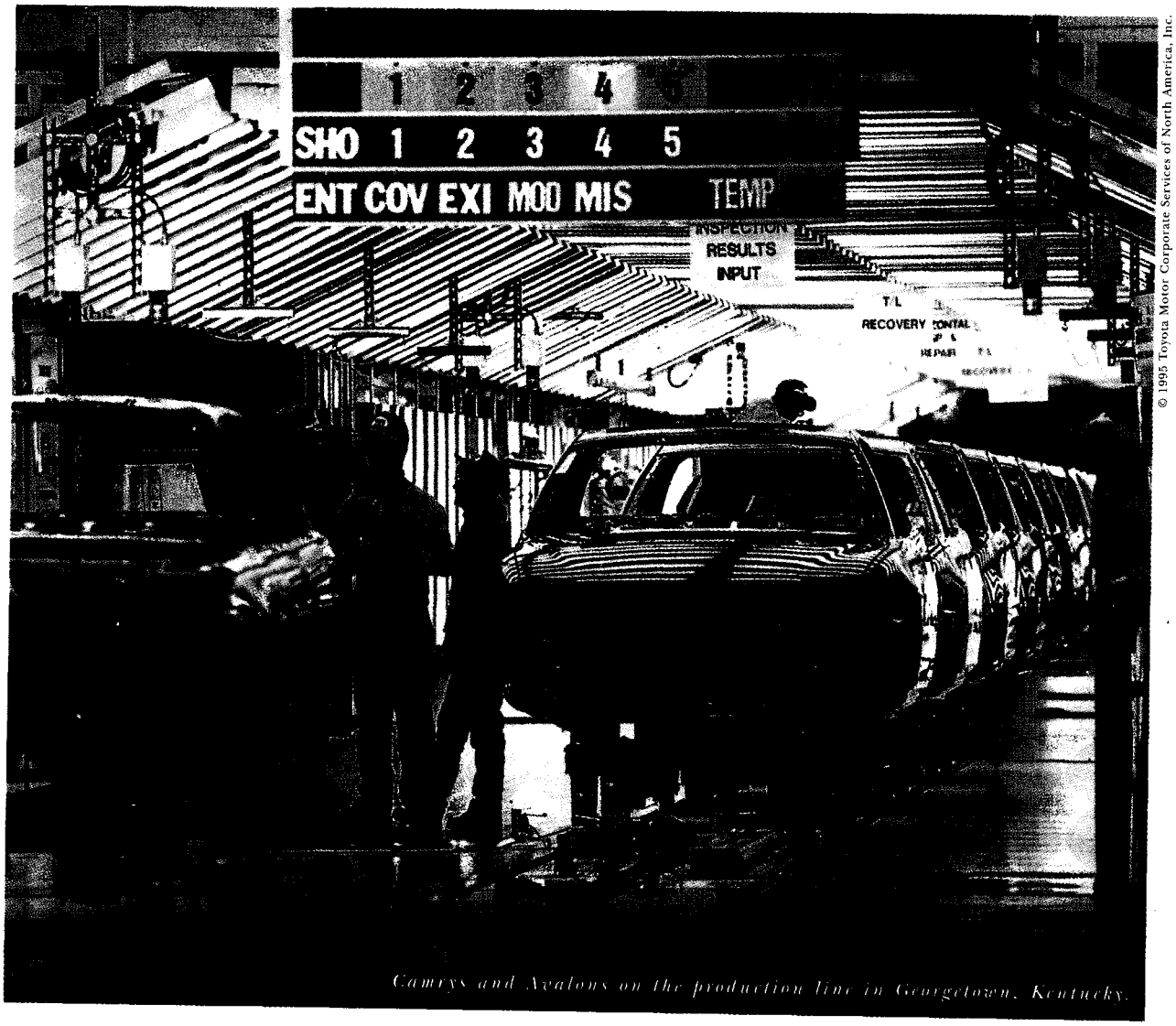

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General Motors.

"We've got three trucks and 300 bison, and we've never had a single traffic jam."

People and nature can live in harmony, according to John Sawhill, President of The Nature Conservancy. For instance, bison at the Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Oklahoma share miles of pristine grassland with tourists and scientists. To protect and preserve the land, The Nature Conservancy gets corporations, landowners and private citizens to work together to help. The goal: safeguarding the environment without destroying jobs or businesses. That's a goal General Motors shares. So we're supplying funds, talent and even the GMC Trucks used to maintain Tallgrass. John says, "The Conservancy gets results you can walk around on." And the results are truly spectacular.

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